

Education Executive  
29 September 2009

**IRVINE, 29 September 2009** - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 1.00 p.m.

**Present**

John Bell, Tom Barr, Reverend David Karoon, Margaret McDougall, David O'Neill and John Reid.

**In Attendance**

E. Murray, Chief Executive; C.Kirk, Corporate Director; M. Docherty, J. Leckie, J. Ward, Heads of Service and A. Cowieson, Quality Improvement Officer (Educational Services); B. Docherty, Corporate Director (Social Services); D. Nibloe, Chief Accountant (Finance); J. Montgomery, General Manager; P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer and J. Stevenson, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

**Also In Attendance**

A. Gorman, Headteacher, St. Palladius' Primary School, Dalry and N. Robb, Headteacher, Dykesmains Primary School, Saltcoats.

**Chair**

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Very Reverend Canon Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara and Gordon Smith.

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in respect of items of business on the agenda.

**2. Chair's Remarks**

The Chair referred to the recent announcement by the Scottish Government of the first 14 secondary schools to benefit from a £1.25 billion school building programme. In the announcement, Garnock Academy was included on the list of schools selected for the initial round of investment.

The Corporate Director advised the Education Executive that the Scottish Futures Trust would fund two thirds of the project, with the remaining third being funded by the Council. It was anticipated that confirmation of the award would be received in November 2009 in relation to the programme of building works.

Noted.

### **3. Dalry: St Palladius' Primary School: Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Report**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Report on St. Palladius' Primary School, Dalry.

St. Palladius Primary School was inspected by 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 pupils' 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 HMIE Inspectors was published on 25 August 2009 and identified the following key strengths:-

- Friendly children who enjoy their learning and contribute well to the school and wider community.
- The leadership of the headteacher and commitment of staff in improving the learning experiences for children.
- The very effective pastoral care of the children provided by all members of the school community.
- The contribution of members of the wider community to enriching the learning experience for the children.

The following areas for improvement have been agreed between HMIE, the school and the Education Authority:

- Continue to expand active learning opportunities for children to develop their independence as learners.
- Work together to further develop approaches in line with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Further develop the school's approaches to self-evaluation with an increased focus on meeting the learning needs of all children.

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 A Gorman, 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 (a) approved the proposals made to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) noted the arrangements for follow-through.

#### **4. Saltcoats: Dykesmains Primary School: Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Report**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Report on Dykesmains Primary School, Saltcoats.

Dykesmains Primary School was inspected by HMIE in June 2009 as part of as national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages.

HM Inspectors evaluated pupils' 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 HMIE Inspectors was published on 25 August 2009 and identified the following key strengths:-

- Motivated and well-behaved children who show confidence in tackling demanding work.
- Learning experiences which engage children and frequently let them work well together.
- High standards of attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Staff's relationship with children and high expectations of behaviour and attitude towards learning.
- The culture of continuous improvement where staff are willing to innovate.
- The headteacher's leadership of improvement supported by the depute headteacher and principal teacher.

One area for improvement has been agreed between HMIE, the school and the education authority:

- Staff should continue to build on the school's existing high quality learning experiences to further improve the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

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. Educational Services will ensure that the good practice identified in Dykesmains Primary School will be shared across the cluster and with other schools in North Ayrshire.

Mrs N Robb, the headteacher of the school was present and responded to questions from Members on innovations undertaken in the school such as home visits to children about to enter Primary 1. Mrs Robb also indicated that she would be making a presentation on good practice within the school to a meeting of the cluster group.

The Education Executive congratulated the headteacher and her staff on their outstanding report.

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

## **5. Nursery Inspections: Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Reports**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) Inspection Reports on nursery classes and centres.

During the period August 2008 till June 2009, HMIE carried out 11 nursery inspections in North Ayrshire. Six partner Centres, four local authority classes and one nursery centre were inspected, details of which were contained within the report.

All the nurseries inspected demonstrated a range of strengths, including: -

- Meeting the needs of children and families.
- Positive ethos.
- Partnership with parents.
- Strong staff team.
- Children's learning experiences.
- Leadership.
- Children's outdoor experiences.
- Outstanding provision for babies and their parents.
- Quality of links with the local community.
- Range of resources including natural and sensory materials.
- Children's confidence and skills in physical activities.

All nurseries had between one and four agreed areas for improvement, including the following areas:

- Improved approaches to meeting children's needs.
- Further develop approaches to self-evaluation.
- Continue to develop approaches to monitoring and evaluating children's experiences and achievements.
- Provide more opportunities to think about their own learning.
- Improve opportunities for children to learn about science and technology.

Ten of the eleven reports were positive, with evaluations ranging from "excellent" to "satisfactory". The outcome of the inspection of Bambi Nursery was not positive and led to the Nursery Management Committee deciding to discontinue the service. North Ayrshire Council assumed responsibility for the nursery provision of the 16 children registered at the nursery which will now be known as Kelburn Nursery Class and will be managed by the headteacher at Kelburn Primary School. HMIE have been informed of this development and are satisfied that this will lead to improvements.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer, Partnership Officer and staff, the headteachers/heads of centres have put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE reports into their Improvement Plans. The designated Quality Improvement Officer and Partnership Officer will remain in contact with the nurseries throughout the follow-through period to offer advice and support where necessary and to monitor the centres' progress in implementing the Plan.

The Education Executive (a) approved (i) the proposals made to address the key points for action; and (ii) the changes made to provision in the Kelburn area; and (b) noted the arrangements for follow-through.

## **6. Breakfast Clubs**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a proposed review of Breakfast Clubs.

The Scottish Government's Childcare Strategy aims to encourage the development of affordable, accessible, sustainable and high quality childcare to enable parents/carers to take up employment or training. The provision of Breakfast Clubs supports this strategy.

Previously, several Breakfast Clubs were established in North Ayrshire as part of the New Community School Initiative or through Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) funding. Clubs were initially established in areas of deprivation to ensure children from vulnerable families received a breakfast. More recently clubs have been set up to provide childcare for working parents with many clubs existing for both purposes.

In 2005, Children's Outreach Services assumed the management of breakfast clubs run in primary schools. All clubs are now run in accordance with the same policies, procedures and staffing ratios, and there is a consistent pricing structure.

The average cost of running a breakfast club is over £12,000 dependant on the size of the club. Children's Outreach Services has an overall budget of £92,902 which no longer supports the operation of the existing clubs. In 2008/09, the overall cost of running the clubs was £156,000. In 2009/10 staffing costs will increase in line with pay settlements, and the growing number of clubs had led to the need for a part-time Breakfast Club Manager, incurring a central cost of £15,000 per year in addition to the running costs for each centre.

As a result of these emerging budget pressures, Educational Services is unable to fund breakfast club provision beyond June 2010. Accordingly, the report proposed the closure of the current breakfast club provision by that date in two phases to allow staff at Children's Outreach Services to support service users in finding suitable alternative provision. The four clubs with the lowest attendance, as highlighted in appendix 1 to the report, would close by January 2010 with the remaining 10 closing by June 2010.

The Education Executive agreed, in recognition of the budget pressures, to close the four breakfast clubs with the lowest attendance figures by January 2010, and the remaining ten clubs by June 2010, subject to the outcome of a bid for funding in the 2010/2011 budget.

## **7. Revisions to School Transport Policy with Particular Reference to Primary Aged Children**

**This item was subject to the call-in procedure per the Council's Scheme of Administration. Please refer to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9 October 2009.**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposed changes to the School Transport Policy and in particular the eligibility criteria for primary aged children.

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the Council, as Education Authority is required to assist with transport for children to attend school provided certain criteria are met. The Act requires that children over 8 years of age should not walk more than 3 miles to school, and children under 8, no more than 2 miles. In assessing a walking route, the authority should take account of road safety.

North Ayrshire Council's School Transport Policy has a number of additional criteria relating to deciding when a child is eligible for support with transport to school. Children with certain additional support needs or specific medical conditions receive assistance with school transport irrespective of the required walking distance. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act requires that the Authority should support children to access education in cases where the disability of their parents/carers may cause difficulties.

North Ayrshire Council currently operates a more generous policy than required by statute which is no longer sustainable given the financial constraints on the Council. Secondary aged pupils currently require to walk 3 miles before being eligible for assistance with transport. Primary aged children require to walk no more than 1 mile. The change of criteria at the age of 8 is not currently used by the Council.

The Council currently operates 63 dedicated school transport contracts of which 39 are deemed to be necessary on the grounds of road safety. The cost of the remaining contracts is estimated at £220,280 per year.

In light of emerging budget pressures, the report proposed changes in the eligibility for free school transport for primary aged children which would potentially generate savings of £150,000 per year.

In order to move to a more efficient use of resources and to generate a financial saving, the proposed walking distance would be increased to 2 miles which would meet the legislative requirements although it does not take account of the change of distance at 8 years of age.

The legislation requires the authority to take into account road safety when assessing walking routes to school, to include speed and volume of traffic, sight lines, lighting and the availability of stepping off places.

Appendix 1 to the report contained details of the current primary school transport contracts managed by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport. The anticipated number of children affected by the proposed changes would be approximately 377 attending 16 primary schools. Appendix 2 to the report contained details of the revised Transport Policy.

In order to take account of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, the report proposed that specific reference be made to cases where parents/carers are unable to accompany their children to school.

Education Services will work with the Council's School Travel Plan Coordinator, Property Services, to further develop alternative routes to school.

The Education Executive (a) noted the additional requirements arising from the Disability Discrimination Act; (b) agreed to amend the distance criteria for eligibility for free school transport for primary aged children to 2 miles; and (c) approved the revised School Transport Policy as detailed in appendix 2 to the report, subject to the outcome of a bid for funding in the 2010/2011 budget.

## **8. Partnership Forums**

Submitted joint report by the Corporate Directors (Educational Services) and (Social Services) on progress being made with regard to the implementation of an innovative approach to assessing the needs of vulnerable children and young people and providing individual support at local level.

In October 2007, a report was submitted to the Education Executive outlining a proposal to pilot an initiative "Partnership Forums" in the Three Towns area. The pilot in the area was evaluated internally by Psychological Services and a number of benefits highlighted. In addition, during an HMIE inspection of Services to Protect Children in May 2008, inspectors visited the Partnership Forums for pre-school children, primary and secondary aged children in one locality and commented favourably on the initiative. The Inspection of Education Functions of North Ayrshire Council in April 2009 concluded that the Partnership Forums set up in the areas of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston, enabled staff from education, health and social work to co-operate effectively in meeting the needs of identified young people.

The Partnership Forum initiative has devolved to local groups the responsibility for resource allocation to meet the need of vulnerable children and young people. North Ayrshire has been split into four localities for the purpose of administering these forums:

- Irvine and Kilwinning;
- Three Towns;
- Garnock Valley and the North Coast, and
- Arran.

The Forums are a mechanism to implement the principles of the Scottish Government initiative "Getting It Right For Every Child" (GIRFEC). In each locality there are three Partnership Forums set up to conduct integrated multi-agency assessments and develop plans to meet the needs of the identified children. The report proposed that the roll-out of this initiative to all areas of North Ayrshire is continued and its effectiveness evaluated.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) the continuation of the Partnership Forum initiative; and (b) receive a further progress report following an evaluation of its effectiveness.



## **9. Implications of Changes to the Additional Support for Learning Legislation and Good Practice Guidance**

Submitted joint report by the Corporate Directors (Educational Services) and (Social Services) on the potential impact of changes in statutory duties relating to Additional Support Needs.

Following a period of consultation, the Scottish Ministers introduced significant changes to the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004. These amendments are set out in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009. In addition Scottish Ministers are taking a more active role in national advertising of the rights of parents and pupils and of the duties placed on local authorities by the existing Act.

Previously following such campaigns, local authorities experience greatly increased requests from parents and carers for assessment and for additional support to be provided.

Parents and carers of children and young people with additional support needs now have significantly enhanced rights in terms of placing requests to (a) other local authorities, and (b) the private sector. Full details were contained within the report.

The report highlighted two critical resource challenges arising from the legislative changes:

- It becomes more likely that children and young people will meet the criteria for opening a Co-ordinated Support Plan. Preparation and maintenance of such plans make significant additional demands on personnel across agencies.
- There is a need for a wider range of resources and types of service to meet the broader (and often non-school based) support needs.

These demands will create staffing pressure and may lead to increased costs.

Currently Looked After Children are supported as any other child within the legislation; where needs emerge, assessment is undertaken and support provided. In terms of the amendments, every Looked After Child *has* additional support needs unless formal assessment determines that no additional support is required. In North Ayrshire the legislation will require approximately 500 formal assessments to be undertaken. The outcome of these assessments will require to be recorded.

The report indicated that the new arrangements will place significant additional demands on school based and Social Services personnel. Financial implications for Educational Services may be approximately £100,000 in both staff assessment costs and additional costs that may need to be deployed. The report further indicated that Educational Services will take steps to strengthen the use of in house resources by creating high-quality advertising materials for North Ayrshire specialist services and schools.

The Education Executive then heard responses from officers on parents rights' of appeal to Scottish Ministers.

The Education Executive agreed (a) to note the potential impact of changes in statutory duties relating to Additional Support Needs and (b) a further report will be presented in due course on the impact of the changes following the media campaign.

#### **10. 5-14 Assessment and SQA Examination Results 2009**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the performance of North Ayrshire schools in 5-14 assessment and the National SQA examinations of 2009.

North Ayrshire Council Educational Services collects data on progress made by pupils at P3, P4, P6, P7 and S2 within the 5-14 programme in reading, writing and mathematics on an annual basis. Progress is related to the percentage of pupils who achieve the appropriate level within the required timescales. Full details were contained within appendix 1 to the report.

The report indicated that Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) are published each year which give a detailed analysis of the national SQA Examination results, and outlined the average figures for five or more awards at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) at levels three, four and five and a range of level six awards. An analysis of these charts, over a five year period, making comparisons with other similar authorities, national performance and past performance in North Ayrshire between 2005 and 2009, was outlined in appendix 2 to the report. Individual school performance comparisons across the measures were detailed in appendix 3.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the current position; and (b) receive a further report at a future meeting in due course on performance in 5-14 assessment and the 2010 diet of SQA examinations.

## **11. Appointment of Church of Scotland Representative to the Education Executive**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the resignation of Mr John Scott as the Church of Scotland representative on the Education Executive, and on arrangements to fill the vacancy arising.

In terms of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 the Council is required to appoint 3 religious representatives to the Education Executive. The Church of Scotland representative, Mr John Scott, tendered his resignation on the grounds of ill health. Mr Scott has been associated with North Ayrshire Council since 2005 through his membership of the Education Executive and its predecessor Committees the Educational Services Committee and Standing Sub Committee, and the Raising Awareness Member/Officer Working Group.

Contact has been made with the Church of Scotland seeking a nomination for Mr Scott's successor. A report thereon will be submitted to a future meeting.

The Education Executive (a) acknowledged the contribution made by Mr John Scott to the work of the Education Executive and the former Educational Services Committee; and (b) noted that a report on a Church of Scotland representative will be presented to a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.30 p.m.