

Education Executive
17 January 2012

IRVINE, 17 January 2012 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

John Bell, Tom Barr, Alex Gallagher, Gordon McConnell, Peter McNamara, David O'Neill and Gordon Smith.

In Attendance

C. Kirk (Corporate Director), M. Armstrong, Head of Service, D. Carracher and G. Johnstone, Quality Improvement Managers (Education and Skills); C. McCourt, Finance Manager (Finance and Infrastructure); J. Montgomery, General Manager, K. Dyson, Communications Officer and P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

E. Miller, Headteacher, St. John's Primary School and Nursery Class.

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Very Reverend Matthew Canon McManus and John Reid.

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bell declared a non-financial, non-significant interest in Agenda Item 5 (Garnock Campus Project - Site Selection Progress Report) as the spouse of a member of the Parent Council, and parent of a pupil at Moorpark Primary School.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Education Executive held on 6 December 2011 were signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Attendance, Exclusion and School Leaver Destinations

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the publication of the annual Attendance, Exclusion and School Leaver Destinations Return (SLDR) and seeking approval to use the North Ayrshire data to target support and resources.

At its meeting on 18 January 2011, the Education Executive agreed to receive an annual progress report on school leaver destinations. School attendance and exclusion data has also been provided to the Education Executive as separate reports.

The School Leaver Destinations Return (SLDR) is a statistical return undertaken each year by Skills Development Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, and is based on a follow-up of young people who leave school between 1 August and 31 July each year. The Scottish Government uses the data to report against the National Indicator and increase the proportion of school leavers from Scottish publically funded schools in positive and sustained destinations (further education, higher education, employment, voluntary work or training).

North Ayrshire Council uses the data to inform initiatives developed as part of the MCMC Strategy, to evidence the success of initiatives, measure progress against targets and to identify areas to target resources to improve the post-school outcomes of young people.

The following categories are used by the Scottish Government to record the destinations of school leavers:

- Higher education;
- Further education;
- Employment;
- Training;
- Voluntary work;
- Unemployed and seeking ;
- Unemployed and not seeking, and
- Not known.

The first five categories are classified as positive post-school destinations and the last three as negative post- school destinations.

The report indicated that attendance rates in North Ayrshire primary and secondary schools showed an improvement between 2006/07 and 2010/11. Secondary school attendance rates were slightly above the national average and primary marginally below. Attendance in special schools declined slightly over the same period to 94.78% however this is still above the national average of 90.04%. Full details were contained in Appendix 1 to the report .

The decreasing trend in the level of exclusion incident, particularly in secondary schools had been maintained. Details were contained in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

The report advised that across Scotland, 88.9% of 2010/2011 school leavers were in positive destinations, representing an increase from the figure in 20089/10 of 86.8%. In North Ayrshire the figure increased from 86.8% in 2009/10 to 90.73% in 2010/11. Full details were contained in Appendix 4 to the report.

During the current school session, every secondary school in North Ayrshire has identified a teacher to carry out the role of 16+/post-school transitions co-ordinator. These teachers are freed up one day per week to focus on supporting pupils approaching their school leaving date. There is a particular focus on more vulnerable groups, and activities include support with application forms, mock interview programmes and employer talks. Skills Development Scotland managers have acknowledged the impact these teachers are having on supporting leavers. Existing programmes which provide early intervention and prepare school leavers continue to be delivered. These include the Activate programme at Kilmarnock College, Community Development provision and Third Sector provision.

Education and Skills Extended Outreach team support the most vulnerable young people during the period leading up to their leaving date, and the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Scheme was expanded this year to offer 90 placements for young people.

Education and Skills is participating in the development of a Data Hub which will improve the sharing of relevant information about school leavers between schools and Skills Development Scotland.

The Education Executive sought, and received, clarification on a number of issues arising from the report, including the influence of Curriculum for Excellence, exclusions and alternatives thereto and monitoring of drop out rates in terms of further and higher education.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the information set out in the Attendance, Exclusion and School Leaver Destination Return; (b) approve the targeting of support and resources to improve outcomes for young people; and (c) receive an annual progress report on school leaver destinations.

4. Science in North Ayrshire Schools and other Education and Skills Establishments

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the development of Science in Schools and the implementation of the North Ayrshire Strategy for Science.

Curriculum for Excellence identifies science as an important part of the country's heritage. The aims of North Ayrshire Council's science strategy are to secure high levels of achievement by those specialising in science, and to ensure that all learners acquire the capacity to cope as citizens when dealing with scientific issues through the platform of the experiences and outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence.

The science strategy has been the subject of considerable consultation within schools throughout North Ayrshire and build on a range of activities continuing to be undertaken in schools in partnership with local colleges and employers. A summary of science activities and developments was contained in Appendix 1 to the report.

In October 2010, a number of representatives from North Ayrshire Council, including school practitioners, attended a Science Summit hosted at Kilmarnock College. The aim of the summit was to raise the profile of science in Ayrshire. As a result, a multi-agency working group was set up, which included representatives from the Scottish Government, Kilmarnock College, East, South and North Ayrshire Councils, the business sector, Ayrshire Chambers of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Glasgow University. The Group is in the process of compiling a final report, containing recommendations on how all involved agencies can work together to promote science engagement across Ayrshire.

The report indicated that representatives from Education and Skills participated in a short-life working group to put in place a cross-Ayrshire Action plan to promote Access to Science for Ayrshire, and have continued to develop partnership working with the Glasgow Science Centre to explore the possibility of extending their current outreach facilities/projects to North Ayrshire schools. The North Ayrshire Education and Skills Science Strategy, currently being reviewed, was contained in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Education Executive sought, and received, clarification on various aspects of the report, including the role of the Glasgow Science Centre, how the philosophy of science is imparted and equipment used and experiments undertaken in schools, in terms of Health and Safety issues.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the information set out in the appendices to the report; (b) support the actions being taken forward by officers in Education and Skills; and (c) receive regular progress reports.

5. Garnock Campus Project - Site Selection Progress Report

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on progress made since the Education Executive of 25 October 2011.

At its meeting on 25 October 2011, the Education Executive agreed to receive a report on the completion of a Regeneration Impact Assessment on the 4 short-listed sites for the proposed new Garnock Campus. It was also agreed that a short life Member/Officer working group be established, consisting of local Members (Wards 6 and 7), the Leader of the Council and Leader of the main opposition party, to consider the outcome of the site visit to the 4 short-listed sites and the Regeneration Impact Assessment and make recommendations regarding the site.

The initial meeting of the Member/Officer working group took place on 5 December 2011, and Appendix 1 to the report contained a copy of the minute.

In terms of the Regeneration Impact Assessment, the work being carried out by an independent consultant was expected to be completed by mid January 2012. The Member/Officer group agreed that a parallel assessment on the deliverability of a campus project on any of the 4 short-listed sites be carried out and considered in conjunction with the Regeneration Impact Assessment.

A draft report was considered by the Member/Officer group on 16 January, and a number of areas identified where more work was required.

The Education Executive agreed (a) to note the report and update from the Member/Officer working group, and (b) that a further report be submitted on completion of the Regeneration Impact Assessment .

6. St John's Primary School and Nursery Class: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the HMIE Report on St John's Primary School and Nursery Class.

St John's Primary School and Nursery Class was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in November 2011 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 the quality of the children's experience in learning and teaching, pupils achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning and the school's processes for self-evaluation. Members of the inspection team met the chairperson of the Parent Council, representatives of local partners and a group of parents.

The HM Inspectors report was published on 20 December 2011 and identified the following key strengths: -

- Polite, well-behaved children who are keen to learn;
- Teamwork and commitment of all staff to improving the school;
- High quality care and support from all staff to ensure children's needs are well met, and
- The welcoming and inclusive ethos based on school values.

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

- Improve children's experiences in the nursery to better meet their needs;
- Continue to develop effective approaches for assessing, tracking and recording children's progress and achievement, and
- Build on the positive start made to curriculum development to improve further children's learning and achievement.

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 and the authority will build on the strengths identified in the inspection report and work together to address the key recommendations to make the necessary improvements.

In terms of follow-through, HMIE will make no further visits given the high level of confidence in the school to make the necessary improvements.

Mrs Miller, the headteacher of the school was in attendance and answered questions from Members on issues unique to the school and staff support in terms of challenging behaviour.

The Education Executive noted the steps taken to address the key points for action, and that in terms of follow-through, HMIE will make no further visits given the high level of confidence in the school to make the necessary improvements.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.