

Education Executive  
12 May 2009

**IRVINE, 12 May 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, Very Reverend Matthew Canon McManus, David O'Neill and Gordon Smith.

**In Attendance**

C. Kirk, Corporate Director and M. Docherty, Head of Service (Educational Services); J. Montgomery, General Manager and P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's).

**Also In Attendance**

I. Wallace, Principal Psychologist (Educational Services).

**Chair**

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

John Reid.

**1. HMIE Inspection of the Educational Psychology Service**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Service) on a report by HM Inspectorate of Education on the Council's Educational Psychology Service.

The education functions of each local authority in Scotland were inspected between 2000 and 2005. A second cycle of inspections began in 2006 which incorporated an evaluation of Educational Psychology Services (EPS). The inspection of the education functions of North Ayrshire Council included an evaluation of the quality of Educational Psychology provision. The evaluation of EPS is conducted within a framework of quality indicators which embody the Government's policy on Best Value.

The report by HM Inspectors was published on 14 April 2009 and a summary of the evaluation was appended to the report.

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths. The service had:

- Developed very robust and comprehensive self-evaluation and operational planning systems and processes leading to continuous improvement.
- Strong leadership across all staff with a clear focus on adding value through the delivery of high quality psychological services.

- Developed very good partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly in the post school sector.
- Made significant contributions to the authority's aim of building capacity in the community.

As well as identifying a number of key strengths HMIE also identified the following features of good practice:

- Post school psychological service (PSPS); and
- Operational planning.

The following areas for improvement have been agreed between HMIE and the Educational Psychology Service:-

- Continue to develop its services so that it has more impact on policy and practice nationally.
- Extend its assessment services to ensure quality of service and improved outcomes for all stakeholders.

In consultation with service users the Principal Psychologist has put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE report into the Psychological Service Improvement Plan.

As a result of the very high performance and the very effective leadership of the Educational Psychology Service, HM Inspectors will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. Within two years of the publication of this report the Principal Psychologist will publish a progress report.

In response to questions on the report, the Education Executive was advised that in relation continuing to develop the service to have more impact nationally, the reference in the report related to the duty to share the current best practice identified within the service with other authorities. In this regard the Education Executive was advised that a delegation from a Scottish Local Authority had arranged a visit to view various procedures and practices within the Educational Psychology Service.

The Education Executive (a) noted the report; and (b) agreed to approve the proposals to address the main points for action in the inspection report and the arrangements for follow-through.

## **2. Educational Services Improvement Plan 2009-2012**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Service) on the Educational Services Improvement Plan.

The Education Executive approved the undernoted priorities for the Service Improvement Plan in March 2009:-

- Increasing educational attainment and achievement;
- Developing confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors and successful learners;
- Increasing the number of young people moving to positive post-school destinations;
- Promoting better health and more physical activity;
- Reducing disadvantage and promoting equality;
- Empowering communities through participation in cultural and lifelong learning;
- Supporting the professional development of staff; and
- Making the best use of resources and providing high quality facilities.

In April 2009, the Executive of North Ayrshire Council approved proposals to address the main points for action in the report by HM Inspectorate of Education on the education functions of North Ayrshire Council. These were to:-

- Improve levels of pupils' attainment particularly the performance of secondary pupils in SQA awards;
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of learning and teaching in secondary schools;
- Continue to work to further improve the proportion of school leavers proceeding to positive destinations; and
- Further strengthen the joint working of schools and other authority staff in promoting the development of community capacity.

The proposals to address the main points for action have been built into the Improvement Plan, a copy of which was appended to the report.

The main priorities for Educational Services will be to contribute to the Council's regeneration strategy through improving educational attainment, achievement and employability under the Community Plan priorities as detailed in the report.

The Improvement Plan contains the 3 year strategic overview, high level priorities and actions to be undertaken over the next 18 months. Detailed action plans to take forward the priorities and commitments in the service plan will be developed by schools, establishments and services within the service grouping and will underpin improvement and action plans across the whole service.

The financial implications arising from this report will be met from the current budget allocation. All recommendations are fully compliant with equalities legislation. Implementation of these priorities will contribute to the achievement of targets within the Single Outcome Agreement.

In response to questions on aspects of the report, the Education Executive was advised that reports on progress in relation to the Plan would be submitted at 6-monthly intervals. Individual schools required to submit their plans by June 2009 identifying challenging targets. In relation to Clean and Green issues, the Education Executive was advised that while the targets for green issues within schools were high, it was considered that they were achievable.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) approve the Service Improvement Plan; (b) receive 6 monthly reports on the progress of the plans together with examples of how individual schools were implementing the plans and (c) receive an annual report on progress.

### **3. Scottish Survey of Achievement Mathematics Report 2008**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Service) on the Scottish Survey of Achievement Report for North Ayrshire Council.

The Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) is a national survey of pupils attainment in the 5-14 curriculum at P3, P5, P7 and S2. Each stage is tested at a number of levels. In previous years the survey covered English language (2005), social subjects (enquiry skills) (2006) and science (2007). The 2008 survey assessed mathematics and core skills and was attached to the report at appendix 1. The survey produces one report at national level and a second at local authority level for the 19 "opting in" authorities.

At P3 and P5 attainment in mathematics and numeracy in North Ayrshire is broadly in line with attainment nationally. At P7 and S2 attainment is slightly below the national level.

The report indicated a gender variance across most stages and levels in mathematics and numeracy. Boys attainment is better at the highest levels tested at each stage, while at the lowest levels tested at each stage girls tend to have higher attainment. In addition to the direct assessment of pupils' mathematical skills, teachers were invited to submit judgements of current 5-14 levels in mathematics for each pupil in the survey. Teachers consistently judged more pupils to be at the expected levels or beyond than the results of the tests showed.

Questionnaire results from pupil and teachers indicated that across the stages most pupils wanted to do well in mathematics but their enjoyment and interest decreased through primary into S2. Teachers agreed that the majority of pupils had good motivation and that motivation was higher in primary school compared to S2. Pupil confidence in mathematics was generally lower at S2 than in primary.

According to pupils, there was more discussion of mathematics in primary school than in S2. Pupils and teachers agreed that teaching as a whole class was more frequent in S2 than in primary. Confidence among teachers was generally lowest at P3 and increased in P7. Teachers of S2 were consistently confident teaching mathematics topics. Teachers' ratings of pupil attendance and class behaviour was 'very positive'. Around one in five primary teachers had not taken part in any mathematical CPD in the last four years.

In the core skills of reading and writing pupils in North Ayrshire outperformed pupils in the national sample. In reading, pupils at P7 and S2 exceeded the attainment of the national sample by a wider margin than at the earlier stages.

The difference in gender attainment will be monitored and addressed through the ongoing monitoring of attainment.

National results in both mathematics and numeracy show that pupils from deprived areas had lower attainment than those in less deprived areas. Comparisons with previous years surveys show that attainment has remained relatively stable. Attainment levels in both mathematics and numeracy nationally and in North Ayrshire were good in early primary and decreased through the stages to S2.

The Education Executive (a) noted the content of this report; and (b) agreed to approve the proposed actions to improve attainment in mathematics and ensure consistency in assessment.

#### **4. Literacies Strategy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Service) on the Educational Services Literacies Strategy.

The Scottish Government has published the Experiences and Outcomes for Literacy and Numeracy which provides a context for future developments to raise achievement and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Ensuring there is a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in children, young people and adults is a key priority for North Ayrshire Council. This strategy contributes to the achievement of the national indicators and targets within our Single Outcome Agreement, that young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, and the number of working age people with severe literacy and numeracy problems is reduced.

The Literacies Strategy, attached to the report at appendix 1, encompasses literacy and numeracy from birth to 100 and aims to provide a coherent skills based approach to the development of fundamental life skills and will contribute to improved outcomes for learners of all ages in North Ayrshire Council.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) approve the Literacies Strategy; and (b) receive progress reports at future meetings.

The meeting ended at 2.20 p.m.