

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE) COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE on 26 AUGUST 2014.

Present – Councillors Stuart Borrowman (Chair), David Dodds, Tony Boyle, Alexander Davidson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Carl John, Dave King, Danny Logue, John McGinty, Anne McMillan, George Paul and Jim Walker; Appointed Representatives John Hendrie, Myra MacPherson and Lynne McEwen.

Apologies – Councillor Andrew Miller and Appointed Representative Eric Lumsden.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

Broxburn Academy VSE

The Chair ruled in terms of Standing Order 11 that Agenda Item 9 (Broxburn Academy VSE) be considered following Agenda Item 6 (Springfield Primary School VSE) to enable the Chair of the Parent Council of Broxburn Academy to attend the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. MINUTE

The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 3 June 2014 as being a correct record.

Matters arising: Minute Item 3 – Private Session; page 29.

In response to proposals that consideration be given to Education (Quality Assurance) Committee meetings being held in public, similar to the Performance Committee meetings, the Depute Chief Executive provided the following update:

The established practice in West Lothian was for Education Scotland inspection reports, related action plans and school review reports to be considered in private session to enable detailed consideration of matters arising from the reports touching on performance of a school's head teacher and management team. However, Education Scotland inspection reports and school's action plans were published on-line. Similarly, it was expected that school reviews and Validated Self Evaluation reports would be shared with parents/carers by the Head Teacher.

Reports to Performance Committee in relation to the performance of all other non-education council services have been dealt with in public. It would therefore be appropriate, in the interest of openness and transparency, for the arrangements relating to school inspections and

school review processes to be considered in public session in line with the arrangements for the council Performance Committee. It would still be possible for the statutory procedures for dealing with business in private to be applied in any particular case for another reason, however, the general rule would be that reports on schools' performance would proceed in public.

Decision

Agreed that future Education (Quality Assurance) Committee meetings be held in public session.

4. PRIVATE SESSION

The Committee resolved that items 5-8 undernoted be taken in private (exempt under Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973).

5. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: SPRINGFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) which provided details of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out in Springfield Primary School and the identified actions arising.

The report advised that the VSE was carried out in Springfield Primary School in March 2014. The school serves an area of Linlithgow with an intake primarily drawn from a large housing estate. The Committee was advised that the Head Teacher had only been in post since the beginning of the school term in August 2014. It was also noted that the school had undergone significant building works to the roof prior to the VSE being carried out. At the time of the VSE the school roll was 307, with 40 morning and 40 afternoon places in the nursery.

The focus of the VSE was:

- Ensuring school self-evaluation was rigorous, systematic and positively impacted on learning and teaching and outcomes for children and young people;
- The implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the impact on learning with a particular emphasis on ensuring that curricular programmes and pathways provided breadth, depth and progression across all curriculum areas and enabled children and young people to develop appropriate knowledge and skills; and
- Progressing in the learning and teaching of writing, ensuring continuity and progression.

The Committee was advised that the process enabled the school to reflect on its performance through the benefit of gathering and analysing evidence within a wider team. The process challenged the overall

accuracy of the Standards and Quality Report of June 2013.

The Head Teacher then advised the Committee that members of staff were committed to continuous improvement in school and worked well as part of a team. Parental engagement was a priority with parents engaging with the school and also working well as part of the team. Staff welcomed the opportunity to engage in quality professional dialogue ensuring a shared understanding of the curriculum. The school improvement plan contained appropriate areas for development to address the priority of raising attainment. The Head Teacher advised that the results from adaptive testing highlighted the schools strengths and weaknesses. Staff would continue to ensure that there was a sustained focus on the impact of strategies for raising attainment in school.

In conclusion, the VSE visit to Springfield Primary School and Bonnytown Nursery enabled the school to reflect on its performance through the benefit of gathering and analysing evidence within a wider team. The school's arrangements for self-evaluation were increasingly more effective and the school was well-placed to continue to improve.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

Noted the terms of the report.

6. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: BROXBURN ACADEMY

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) which provided details of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out in Broxburn Academy for Science, Broad General Education (BGE) and Mathematics and the identified actions arising, details of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The report advised that the VSE was carried out in Broxburn Academy for Science BGE and Mathematics in February 2014. The school serves the communities of Broxburn, Dechmont, Pumpherston, Uphall and Uphall Station. The Head Teacher had been in post since August 2007 and was supported by a Depute Head Teacher and an Acting Depute Head Teacher. The Principal Teacher Curriculum (PTC) Science and Computing had been in post since January 2006 and the PTC Mathematics and Numeracy had been in post since August 2011.

The focus of the VSE was to evaluate:

- The quality of the student learning experience, including the level of challenge, pace of learning and progression and the extent to which all learners needs were being met;
- The extent to which self-evaluation was rigorous, systematic and positively impacted on learning and teaching and outcomes for children and young people.

- The extent to which the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence was impacting on learning. There was a particular emphasis to evaluate how curricular programmes and pathways provided breadth, depth and progression across all curriculum areas and enabled children and young people to develop appropriate knowledge and skills;
- The extent to which learners' experiences allowed them to achieve appropriate levels of attainment.

The Head Teacher advised the Committee that the school's focus was on raising pupil attainment through robust self-evaluation processes, which enabled more accurate judgement about performance and priorities for improvement. The Head Teacher then provided members with an update on the results of the Higher examinations received for both faculties which compared favourably to other comparative local authority schools in Scotland. Pupils were being assessed to review their performance which enabled staff to identify any areas where support was required. A strong collegiate approach was also taken to help improve standards and share best practices. Both faculties were well placed in order to support continuous and ongoing improvements.

The Parent Council Chair advised the Committee that parents were aware of the improvements made in school through self-evaluation processes. Parents welcomed the improvements and would continue to be supportive of the school's management team.

The Education Officer confirmed that work would continue to share good practices with Faculty Heads across the authority to help raise attainment in schools.

During the question and answer session the Committee acknowledged the excellent progress made and congratulated staff, under the leadership of the Head Teacher, for their hard work and commitment.

In conclusion, the staff in the Science and Mathematics departments have developed increasingly robust self-evaluation processes and were making more accurate judgements about their performance and priorities for improvement. The Head Teacher would share the VSE report with parents/carers.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

Noted the terms of the report.

7. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: MID CALDER PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) which provided details of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Mid Calder Primary

School and the identified actions arising.

The report advised that the VSE was carried out in Mid Calder Primary School in March 2014. The school serves the village of Mid Calder. The Head Teacher had been in post since January 2014 and the Depute Head Teacher (DHT) had been in post since April 2014, however, at the time of the VSE the school had an acting DHT who had been in post from September 2013. There was also a principal teacher who had been in post for 10 years. At the time of the VSE the school roll was 288, with 30 places for children in both the morning and afternoon classes.

The focus of the VSE was:

- Ensuring school self-evaluation was rigorous, systematic and positively impacted on learning and teaching and outcomes for children and young people; and
- The implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the impact on learning. There was a particular emphasis on ensuring that curricular programmes and pathways provided breadth, depth and progression across all curriculum areas to enable children and young people to develop appropriate knowledge and skills.

The Head Teacher then advised the Committee that members of staff welcomed the VSE process which provided a true reflection on the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff members were taking ownership of their own professional learning and were committed to self-evaluation across stakeholders to ensure school improvement. Leadership at all levels was developing and overall staff were keen to lead new improvements. Staff recognised the need to continue to review the curriculum in line with revised national and local expectations. The introduction of staff attainment meetings demonstrated commitment from staff to engage in quality professional dialogue. The development of a culture of collaboration was established and links with assisting Head Teachers across the cluster group would continue to promote collegiate working. Pupils were able to talk confidently about their learning and were eager participants in their learning progress. The school would continue to promote and explore opportunities to engage with parents and the wider community to ensure that a high quality of learning was provided and the children's needs were being met.

In response to a question from the Committee in relation to the results of the recent VSE compared to the September 2013 evaluations, the Head of Schools with Education Support explained that the VSE carried out in March 2014 challenged and strengthened the accuracy of the VSE which more accurately reflected the school's current position and areas for improvement. Robust procedures were in place to address curriculum development in order to raise attainment in school, under the leadership of the Head Teacher. The Quality Improvement Team would continue to work with the school, supporting the implementation of the school's improvement plan including planned improvements to self-evaluation processes within the school.

In conclusion, the school's arrangements for self-evaluation and the impact on learners would continue to be improved by developing robust processes using revised national and local expectations.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report

Decision

Noted the terms of the report.

8. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: HOWDEN ST ANDREW'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) which provided details of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Howden St Andrew's Primary School and the identified actions arising.

The VSE was carried out in Howden St Andrew's Primary School in March 2014. The denominational primary school served an area of Livingston and was part of the St Margaret's Academy cluster of schools. The Head Teacher had been in post since February 2009. It was also noted that due to the promotion of previous post-holders, the school's extended management team had been subject to significant changes over the previous two year period. An acting Depute Head Teacher and two acting Principal Teachers had recently been appointed. At the time of the VSE the school roll was 344 pupils with a further 39 children in the nursery class.

The focus of the VSE was:

- Ensuring school self-evaluation was rigorous, systematic and positively impacted on learning and teaching and outcomes for children and young people; and
- The implementation of Curriculum for Excellence with an emphasis on approaches to improvements in literacy and the impact of this on learning.

The Head Teacher then advised the Committee that members of staff, pupils and parents welcomed the VSE process which provided evidence of the school's strengths and areas for improvements to ensure the best possible learning experiences were available for pupils. The school worked well with partners, pupils, parents and carers and other stakeholders to ensure that the needs of the children were being met. The Head Teacher also advised that approaches to improve literacy across the curriculum had raised children's awareness of the importance of their education.

The school's arrangements for self-evaluation, in the primary and nursery classes were effective for moving forward. Staff demonstrated a very strong commitment to continuing to develop robust self-evaluation

processes which had a positive impact on the school's focus on attainment and achievements for all pupils. Teachers were taking more ownership of their own professional learning and professional dialogue and continued to work with colleagues to improve the work of the school.

In conclusion, the report advised that the school was well placed to continue to improve. Changes to the teaching of literacy within the school has had a significant impact on pupil engagement and performance across the primary stages. In addition, members of staff have become more skilled in self-evaluation, which reflected in the improvements made since the previous VSE evaluation carried out in May 2013.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

Noted the terms of the report.

9. WORK PLAN 2014-2015

The Committee considered the contents of the work plan (copies of which had been circulated).

The Committee noted the change to the date of the Education (Quality Assurance) Committee meeting from 7th October 2014 to 2nd October 2014. The Committee was also advised that the format of the reports was being reviewed to provide a more consistent format for presenting data.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the work plan;
- Noted the change of date to the meeting scheduled to be held in October 2014; and
- Noted that a review of the format of reports was being carried out.