

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 6 OCTOBER 2015.

Present – Councillors David Dodds (Chair), Stuart Borrowman, Dave King (substituting for Lawrence Fitzpatrick), John McGinty, Andrew Miller and Jim Walker

Apologies – Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick and Appointed Representative Eric Lumsden.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled under Standing Order 11 that agenda item 8 (3-18 Transition Policy) be withdrawn and submitted to the next meeting of the Education PDSP for consideration.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the minute of the meeting held on 1 September 2015 as being a correct record. The Chair thereafter signed the minute.

4. OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed Donna McMaster to the meeting as the newly appointed Head of Education (Development).

5. ADAPTIVE TESTING IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Performance Manager, John Tease, provided the Panel with a presentation on the findings of the adaptive test results following analysis of the third set of results carried out in September 2015, which were derived from tests in all primary stages P2 to P7 and secondary S2. Details in attainment levels across primary stages for the period 2013-2015 were provided for key measures in reading, mental arithmetic, general maths and developed ability. In the 2014/15 session adaptive testing was also trialled in S2 for all secondary schools assessing performance in key areas of reading, mathematics and science. The tests provided information on areas of strength and areas requiring improvement at both individual pupil and school level.

The presentation included the calculation of the value added to pupils attainment in the key areas between primary P7 and secondary S2. The Panel acknowledged that performance in adaptive testing in primary

schools had been maintained or had improved in almost all key measures. However, it was noted that the value added results between P7-S2 for Mathematics and Science was less than expected.

The Performance Manager then responded to questions from members of the Panel. He acknowledged that effective interventions at an early stage and training for teachers at a higher stage of education were also important to enhance attainment and achievement for children and young people in West Lothian.

The Principal Educational Psychologist, Jennyfer McNiven, then provided members with an update on the closing the gap strategy, a priority area of work being carried out by Educational Psychology Services, which supported the authority-wide roll out of nurture practice in primary schools. The Educational Psychology Service also provided support to teaching staff in the delivery of professional learning to support raising attainment and early intervention.

The Panel thanked the officers for their comprehensive presentation.

Following conclusion of the presentation the Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing an update on performance in adaptive testing.

The report confirmed that adaptive testing continues to provide reliable and robust information across key measures of attainment in primary schools. The newly introduced testing in secondary S2 has also produced information which would enable schools to identify the value added to pupils' attainment across S1 and S2, to target improvement and to incorporate additional, relevant and useful data into their processes for identifying appropriate courses and programmes for pupils. It was recommended that further reports on adaptive testing results be considered by the PDSP as more data became available from future testing and that these reports would include an evaluation on the impact of measures introduced to secure improvements in attainment.

### Decision

Noted the presentation and contents of the report.

## 6. SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing details of the changes in the School Leaver Destination Results (SLDR) for 2013/14 based on the follow-up SLDR carried out by Skills Development Scotland in March 2015. Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the SLDR Initial and Follow-up figures for each mainstream secondary school in West Lothian. Appendix 2 provided details of the Scottish Local Authority Initial, Follow-up and Higher Education SLDR figures.

The Opportunities for All Officer, Stuart McKay, advised the Panel that further progress was made in sustaining positive destinations for school

leavers in the March follow-up. The report outlined the key points noted in the March 2015 results which highlighted that West Lothian's performance overall was 0.8% above the Scottish average of follow-up positive destinations for school leavers. Out of 32 local authorities, West Lothian was in 13<sup>th</sup> position which was an improvement of 11 places from the position in March 2014.

Finally, it was noted that more work was required to develop strategies to continue to seek improvements in positive destinations for school leavers in future years.

During the course of the discussion the Panel commended the Community Youth Services Team for their hard work in making a significant improvement on sustained school leaver destination figures.

### Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

## 7. S4 RESULTS 2015

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Service – Education providing details of the S4 SQA and SCQF results for the authority following the 2015 diet of SQA examinations.

The Development Officer, Kenneth Boal, advised the Panel that pupils in West Lothian secondary schools completed National 3-5 courses in S4 for the first time in session 2014/2015. The Panel noted that the figures contained within INSIGHT (the Scottish Government's online benchmarking tool) for S4 pupils in West Lothian did not take into account the significant number of pupils in S4 at Linlithgow Academy who 'bypassed' sitting National 5 courses in S4 and proceeded to Level 6 (Higher) courses in S5. To enable members to compare on a 'like-for-like' basis with the virtual comparator and national figures, a range of measurers were considered to allow for a fair and reasonable comparison to be made, details of which were outlined in the report.

In addition to SQA National Courses there were a number of other awards from the SQA, as well as from other providers, which contributed to a qualification being counted as part of the SCQF. The main areas which were counted within this measure, along with SQA National Courses, were SQA Skills for Work courses, National Certificates and National Progression Awards.

Finally, the SQA examination results for West Lothian area highlighted progress in Session 2014/2015 over the previous years. The impact of vocational and other courses accredited on the SCQF were impacting positively on attainment for pupils and it was expected that this would continue to expand.

During the course of the discussion the Panel acknowledged the impact that vocational qualifications were having on pupil attainment. The Head

of Service – Education undertook to submit a report to a future meeting of the Education PDSP on the reporting of attainment in S4 and attainment at exit from school.

#### Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education PDSP on the reporting of attainment in S4 and attainment at exit from school.

### 8. SCHOOL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME: NEW MODEL

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing details of the progress of the pilot for West Lothian Council's School Work Experience Programme. The pilot reflected a new model of delivery for the programme, aligned to Curriculum for Excellence – Senior Phase and the recommendations of 'Developing Scotland's Young Workforce'.

The report summarised the progress made during the first year of the pilot (2014-15) and the development of further opportunities to enhance the programme.

The Education for Work Officer, Michelle Robertson, advised that Education Scotland's 'Standard for Work Placements' outlined the expectations for all partners involved in organising work placements (parents/carers, employers, pupils, schools and local authorities) and requires that, where possible, placements were individualised, relevant and meaningful to a pupil's career aspirations. The council's new model for work placement would continue to evolve to meet these recommendations. West Lothian has also been identified by Education Scotland as an area of emerging best practice for work experience, including work placements, and as such would co-produce a toolkit of resources which would be available to every local authority in Scotland.

The pilot programme has allowed greater flexibility and personalisation for pupils. The programme was aimed to match pupil career interests to a relevant work placement. The pilot would be rolled out to a further four schools during session 2015-16 and would continue to evolve to include S4, S5 and S6 pupils in school session 2016/17. The School Work Placement Programme would be supplemented with further opportunities for young people to engage with other work-related and work-based learning programmes.

The Panel was asked to note the progress of the Work Placement pilot and acknowledge that enhancing the current programme would assist the authority in meeting Education Scotland's new Standard for Work Placements.

### Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

## 9. EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES: VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing details of the Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) process carried out for Educational Psychology Services (EPS) in partnership with Education Scotland. The report also outlined the ways in which the EPS was taking forward the recommendations of the VSE. The Education Scotland VSE for West Lothian Educational Psychology Services was attached as appendix 1 to the report.

The Principal Educational Psychologist, Jennyfer McNiven, advised that an announcement was made in January 2015 that Education Scotland would be working with all local authority Educational Psychology Services to complete a cycle of validated self-evaluations. The following two national themes for VSEs were identified:

- Learning and Teaching; and
- Partnership Working.

West Lothian Educational Psychology Service was in the first group of local authorities to undertake the VSE in June 2015. This process involved the EPS working closely with partners from primary, secondary and special schools in West Lothian and colleagues from education, social policy and health. The VSE was found to be a positive process which identified areas of strengths of the EPS which were identified within the report. The VSE process also highlighted areas in which the EPS could consider further development.

The EPS has now moved towards a much more focused and targeted approach to service delivery. The three main priority areas of work for the EPS for the next two years was confirmed as:

1. Nurture (Closing the Gap);
2. Additional Support Needs: Building capacity and supporting inclusion; and
3. Application of Teaching & Learning research.

The WLEPS Improvement Plan 2015-2017, attached as appendix 2 to the report, reflected the change to service delivery through a reduced number of projects, focused on interventions with evidence of impact and targeted at those groups for whom the interventions would have the greatest effect. The EPS has been externally recognised and commended for engaging in a wide range of positively evaluated work which was having an impact on children and young people both directly and through the development of staff.

Finally, through the feedback from the VSE, the EPS would continue to work

effectively with families, schools and partners in a much more focused and targeted way to ensure a joined up approach to the quality improvement agenda with the ultimate aim of enhancing attainment and achievement for children and young people in West Lothian.

During the course of the discussion the Panel welcomed the report and acknowledged the excellent VSE process carried out and the new Improvement Plan to take forward the recommendations made by Education Scotland.

#### Decision

Noted the contents of the report and the Improvement Plan for EPS.

#### 10. A DRAFT NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTTISH EDUCATION

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing details of the Scottish Government's Draft National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education, details of which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Head of Education advised the Panel that the Scottish Government announced that it intended to bring forward a National Improvement Framework which would include standardised tests in literacy and numeracy at P1, P4, P7 and S3. The Panel then noted that West Lothian Council carried out adaptive online assessments at P1, P3, P5, P7 and S2 with performance reported annually to the Education PDSP. The assessments provided diagnostic information to teachers on the performance of individual children or different cohorts of children and data for performance management and scrutiny by Education Services.

The Scottish Government's view was that the new standardised tests would replace the range of assessments currently undertaken by thirty local authorities. The assessment results from the National Improvement Framework would be comparable between all schools in Scotland and pupil level data for children in broad general education would be available to the Scottish Government. Data from the assessments would be made public in some yet to be agreed way.

During the course of the discussion concerns were raised about the proposals for new standardised tests to replace the range of data already developed by thirty local authorities. However, it was noted that further information would be available following the published amendments to the Education Bill, the engagement events and the details of the specification of the new standardised tests.

The Panel was advised that schools would continue to build on the improvement strategies for raising attainment and closing the gap already in place in implementing the West Lothian Raising Attainment Strategy.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report; and
- Noted that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel when more information was available.

11. REPORT ON THE ATTAINMENT SCOTLAND FUND SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education providing details of the inclusion of two West Lothian schools in the Scottish Attainment Scotland Fund Schools Programme. Details of the Scottish Attainment Challenge – Attainment Scotland Fund Schools Programme was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report explained that the Schools Programme was part of the national Scottish Attainment Challenge and has a key focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The aim of the Schools Programme was to accelerate improvement by scaling up successful activity and by facilitating and spreading experience and practice of what works at local and national level. The funding to support improvement initiatives would be over four years and the participating schools would have access to a national programme of support and resources, some of which would be available to cluster schools where relevant and appropriate.

Bridgend Primary School and St Thomas' Primary School, Addiewell, were identified by the Scottish Government as recipient schools based on 70% of the children on the school roll who lived in post codes in Deciles 1 and 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2012). A part-time attainment advisor would also be allocated to West Lothian by Education Scotland to assist in building the capacity of practitioners and leaders to undertake self-evaluation and to plan effectively to support continuous improvement in raising attainment.

The Panel was advised that West Lothian has a proven track record in raising attainment and contributes well to local and national collaborative enquiry and shared learning opportunities. While the attainment challenge funds only two schools, Education Services would continue to prioritise and implement activity to achieve improvements in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people experiencing less advantage, wherever they live in West Lothian, in line with the council's Raising Attainment Strategy.

The Head of Education then responded to questions from members of the Panel advising that further reports would be submitted to the Education PDSP regarding the progress being made in supporting improvement initiatives for the two participating schools in West Lothian throughout the four year programme.

The Panel was asked to:

1. Note that Bridgend Primary School and St Thomas' Primary School, Addiewell have been selected by the Scottish Government to be included in the Attainment Scotland Fund Schools programme; and
2. Agree to consider the schools' progress in 'closing the gap' through further reports to the Panel throughout the four year programme.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

12. WORKPLAN

The Panel considered the contents of the workplan (copies of which had been circulated). The Panel agreed the workplan subject to including the 3-18 Transition Policy report to be submitted to the meeting scheduled to be held on 24 November 2015.

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan subject to including the 3-18 Transition Policy report.