

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE) COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE on 3 NOVEMBER 2015.

Present – Councillors Stuart Borrowman (Chair), David Dodds, Tony Boyle, Alexander Davidson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Carl John, Dave King, Sarah King, Danny Logue, John McGinty, Anne McMillan, Andrew Miller and George Paul; Appointed Representatives Myra MacPherson, Lynne McEwen and Parent Council Representative Eric Lumsden.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 5: VSE Bathgate West Nursery School and Balbardie Primary School

Councillor Davidson declared a non-financial interest in that his grandson attended Balbardie Primary School.

2. MINUTE

The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 22 September 2015 as being a correct record. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: BATHGATE WEST NURSERY SCHOOL AND BALBARDIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the outcome of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Bathgate West Nursery School and Balbardie Primary School.

The focus of the VSE was:

The overall quality of the curriculum which included:

- How well did the design of the curriculum meet the needs of all children, including those with additional support needs;
- How well did the curriculum provide progression and flexibility for staff to provide creative content; and
- How effective were transition procedures and programmes in meeting the needs of all learners to ensure continuity and progression.

The VSE team validated the school's judgements in all areas about its performance in school and almost all areas in the nursery with the exception of curriculum which was evaluated as being good rather than very good and partnership with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers as being very good rather than good. The school demonstrated very good capacity for improvement and

has used the VSE process well to adjust some of its evaluations and to sharpen the focus for priorities for improvement.

The Head Teacher, Greg Welsh, provided the Committee with an update on the findings of the VSE carried out in September 2014. He advised that members of staff fully engaged with the VSE and found the process to be positive. Staff were highly motivated and committed to meet the needs of all children. Members were advised that an enquiry based play curriculum across the early level provided opportunities for creativity, challenge and independent learning with staff engaging in training and professional discussion and dialogue.

The VSE established that the school was well led with a very good distributive model of leadership for improvement in place.

The report advised that Mainstream and Autism Resource (ARB) staff worked well together to ensure that children from the ARB were appropriately included in school life and that children in mainstream were given the opportunity to learn about ASD and diversity of needs.

The Head Teacher then responded to questions raised by Committee members. In response to a question relating to backward mapping members were advised that this was a technique used to identify and close gaps to ensure that children received their entitlement to a broad, general education. Members were also advised of the approaches used in classroom observation.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, commended staff, under the leadership of the Head Teacher, for the excellent VSE carried out and members were confident that work would continue to improve attainment in school.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and the update from the Head Teacher.

4. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: PARKHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the outcome of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Parkhead Primary School.

The focus of the VSE was:

- The impact of teaching for effective learning on learner engagement; and
- The quality of transition for parents and children from nursery to primary one.

The Head Teacher, Morag Stewart, advised the Committee that members of staff welcomed the VSE process and used this as an opportunity to

validate the school's self-evaluation about its performance. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development and would review and update the standards and quality report in line with the VSE findings. More robust tracking and monitoring systems were being implemented to track and monitor pupil's progress in key skills from nursery to P7 to continue to raise attainment. The school would also review and develop the curriculum using the West Lothian Curriculum Pathways and national advice to support this work.

Members of staff were becoming more confident and committed to improvement through a strong culture of learning within the school which has enabled pupils to develop their capacity to attain and achieve success. Pupils were motivated and committed to their learning.

The Head Teacher then responded to questions from members of the Committee and provided an update on the approaches used by members of staff in the classroom to observe pupils engagement in their learning development.

The Committee commended the school for the strong VSE report and were confident that members of staff would continue to implement the planned actions to positively impact on pupils learning and attainment.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and the update from the Head Teacher.

5. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: BATHGATE ACADEMY

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the outcome of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Bathgate Academy. The focus of the VSE was:

- Challenge and learners' experiences in S3.

The VSE validated the school's judgements about its performance in the school, with the exception of partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers which was judged to be very good rather than good.

The Head Teacher, Grant Abbot, informed the Committee that the VSE was carried out in October 2015. Members of staff were motivated and engaged fully in the VSE process. They were committed to working with partners to enhance the curriculum for learners and given the opportunity to analyse and reflect on the new national qualifications. Staff engaged in professional dialogue, discussing skills and looking at how they could be transferred across learning with pupils.

The Head Teacher then responded to questions raised by members of the Committee. In response to a question in relation to the impact homework had on pupils progress and achievement, the Head Teacher advised that a new online homework tracking system was being introduced and pupil

focus groups were being set up to support the development of a consistent approach to the use of homework to enhance learning. He also confirmed that the school would continue to improve professional dialogue in order to maximise the impact of support for pupils' learning.

The report advised that the school would continue to develop the monitoring and tracking of progress within the broad general education (BGE) to support assessment, planning of next steps and allow informed choices to be made for pupils moving into the senior phase (SP). The transitions from BGE to SP should enhance learner engagement and be a smooth and appropriate progression based on learners strengths.

The Committee was confident that the schools arrangements for self-evaluation would continue to lead to improvements. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, commended the staff team under the leadership of the Head Teacher, for their hard work and commitment.

It was recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report and the actions arising following the VSE.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and the update from the Head Teacher.

6. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION: MID CALDER PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the outcomes of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) carried out at Mid Calder Primary School.

The Head of Education (Development) advised the Committee that the school took part in two previous VSE processes in March 2014 and February 2015. The VSE carried out in September 2015 was a follow up to highlight progress made from the February 2015 VSE. It was noted that the school would continue to be supported by Education Services to ensure continued improvements were made.

The VSE validated the school's judgements about its performance in the school and nursery with the exception of improvements in performance in the nursery, which were judged to be good rather than satisfactory.

The Head Teacher, Nicola Thompson, advised the Committee that the focus of the VSE was curriculum and learners' experiences. Over the past eighteen months work was ongoing to build up a positive ethos of collaboration in school. Staff were committed to raising attainment and focused on improving teaching and learning across the curriculum. Members of staff continued to work across school clusters using professional dialogue to develop the language of learning across the school. Pupil's leadership was a key strength within school as they confidently carried out their roles within the various groups, delivering positive outcomes for all in the school. The children were a credit to the school community. The school also has a strong and positive parent body

who took an active role in their children's learning experiences.

The new nursery team was enthusiastic and the action plan in place has made a positive improvement within the nursery school. Nursery staff would continue to develop their transition processes from home to nursery and nursery to primary 1 to ensure that children and families were fully supported and that there was progress in learning. The Head Teacher was confident that the nursery school would continue to make improvements across the quality indicator gradings.

The school would continue to develop the use of its systems for tracking and monitoring pupil progress to ensure that they provided appropriate information to support staff in identifying next steps and interventions for individuals. The standards and quality report and school improvement plan would be reviewed and updated in line with the VSE findings and staff would continue to ensure that planned actions impacted positively on the quality of the curriculum, pupils' learning experiences and attainment.

The Head Teacher then responded to questions raised by members of the Committee, confirming that the children were motivated to learn and staff were committed to improving the educational experiences for learners.

The Committee acknowledged that the changes made in school had accelerated improvements since the VSE carried out in August 2014 and were confident that the measures put in place to support the school would have a positive impact to ensure effective school improvement. The committee also recommended that it would have been useful to have background information included within the report from the previous VSE's carried out.

The Committee was asked to note the findings of the VSE and the actions arising.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report and the update from the Head Teacher;
- Noted that Education Services would continue to support the school to ensure continued improvements.

7. WORKPLAN 2015-2016

The Committee noted the contents of the workplan (copies of which had been circulated).

During the course of the discussion Eric Lumsden suggested that it would be useful if schools within the same cluster group were included in the workplan for consideration at the same meeting in future. The Chair also recommended that periodic reports be submitted to the Education Executive to provide an update on the reviews carried out by the Education (Quality Assurance) Committee.

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan.