

9. NOTICE OF MOTION - CEASE P1 TESTING - SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PETER HEGGIE

The Council considered a motion (copies of which had been circulated) submitted by Councillor Peter Heggie in the following terms :-

“That the Council believes although good-quality pupil assessment is an essential component of the drive to raise educational standards in Scotland’s schools, it acknowledges the will of the recent Parliamentary votes and notes the level of concern which has been raised by teachers, education professionals, parents and MSP’s regarding the introduction and delivery of new testing arrangements for Primary 1 pupils.

Acknowledges that although formal, standardised testing is essential in Primary 4 and Primary 7, it should not happen in Primary 1 where it cannot deliver the same meaningful results; considers the Scottish Parliamentary vote against this testing in Primary 1 and the subsequent will of MSP’s who questioned, based on clear and concise evidence, as to whether the new Primary 1 tests are in line with the play-based learning philosophy of early years provision in curriculum for excellence.

Following the vote by Holyrood, John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has ordered for an independent review of P1 testing to report back in May.

Therefore West Lothian Council are to suspend P1 testing with immediate effect until the independent review is completed and direction is given by the Scottish Government.”

- Moved by Councillor Damian Timson and seconded by Councillor Chris Horne

First Amendment

It’s all very well jumping on the back of national politicking but to do so without proper reference to local practice, research and situation, both past and present runs the risk of disrupting children’s education for the sake of a few cheap political points.

It may be worth noting that historically proven good practice in West Lothian of CEM testing included pupils being tested not once, but twice in primary one, a baseline and a follow up

If you look back to 2012/13 when this council were doing significant work on it’s own diagnostic assessment framework you will find the following:

Education executive 29 January 2013: *“In order to maximise the ability to track progress from primary to secondary level accurately, a new testing framework which would be able to be applied at primary and the lower level of secondary has been assessed by senior officers and Headteachers. This adaptive testing framework, produced and administered by Durham University, is increasingly used across other Scottish education authorities”*

*“The testing to be procured will cover pupils **at P1**, at three other stages in Primary, and at S2.”*

It was noted at the time of the introduction of the Government’s proposals for standardised testing that this would mean “fewer” tests for West Lothian pupils that our previously acknowledged and agreed good practice.

It should be noted that to simply stop assessment with no considered alternative would leave a significant group of children with no planned or structured diagnostic assessment.

Of course nothing is unchallengeable and the vote of the parliament has resulted in a commitment to an independent review the P1 element of Standardised testing.

Council therefore:

- Resolves to continue its excellent and unanimously agreed robust processes of assessment and professional teacher judgement.
- Participate via PDSP in the proposed independent review of P1 assessment.
- Report back to PDSP/Education executive upon the conclusion of this review.
- Moved by Councillor Andrew Miller and seconded by Councillor Moira Shemilt

Second Amendment

“Council believes that the Scottish Government in its current term has consistently attempted to impose reforms on Scottish Education despite opposition from COSLA, teaching unions and parent representatives. The Council notes that in a further display of intransigence the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, rather than accept the outcome of the parliamentary vote has ordered an independent review of P1 Scottish National Standardised Assessments, which is due to report in May 2019.

Council notes however that assessment of P1 pupils has been undertaken within West Lothian schools over an extended period, during which no adverse effects have been reported by stakeholders. During this period assessments have provided valuable evidence to support educational improvement, at an individual, class and school level.

The Council holds that effective pupil assessment is an essential component of the drive to raise educational standards in Scotland’s schools, and this is reflected in the Council’s Raising Attainment Strategy. Council therefore agrees to continue to monitor the situation, and make decisions in the best interests of children in West Lothian at such time as all evidence is available.

Council therefore instructs officers to bring a report to the first available Education PDSP, following the publication of the independent review of P1 testing and the wider Scottish Parliament enquiry into the role of standardised testing more generally, with recommendations on the future of standardised testing in P1 in West Lothian Schools.”

Prior to formally moving his amendment Councillor David Dodds indicated that he would consider adopting a joint amendment with the mover of the first amendment. Thereafter Councillors David Dodds and Andrew Miller agreed an amendment as follows:-

“It’s all very well jumping on the back of national politicking but to do so without proper reference to local practice, research and situation, both past and present runs the risk of disrupting children’s education for the sake of a few cheap political points.

It may be worth noting that historically proven good practice in West Lothian of CEM testing included pupils being tested not once, but twice in primary one, a baseline and a follow up.

If you look back to 2012/23 when this council were doing significant work on its own diagnostic assessment framework you will find the following:

Education Executive 29 January 2013: *“In order to maximise the ability to track progress from primary to secondary level accurately, a new testing framework which would be able to be applied at primary and the lower level of secondary has been assessed by senior officers and Headteachers. This adaptive testing framework, produced and administered by Durham University, is increasingly used across other Scottish education authorities.”*

“The testing to be procured will cover pupils at P1, at three other stages in Primary, and at S2.”

It was noted at the time of the introduction of the Government’s proposals for standardised testing that this would mean “fewer” tests for West Lothian pupils that our previously acknowledged and agreed good practice.

It should be noted that to simply stop assessment with no considered alternative would leave a significant group of children with no planned or structured diagnostic assessment.

Of course nothing is unchallengeable and the vote of the parliament has resulted in a commitment to an independent review of the P1 element of Standardised testing.

Council therefore:

- Resolves to continue its excellent and unanimously agreed robust processes of assessment and professional teacher judgement
- Participate via PDSP in the proposed independent review of P1

assessment

- Report back to PDSP/Education Executive upon conclusion of the review

Council therefore instructs officers to bring a report to the first available Education PDSP, following the publication of the independent review of P1 testing and the wider Scottish Parliament enquiry into the role of standardised testing more generally with recommendations on the future of standardised testing in P1 in West Lothian Schools.”

- Moved by Councillor Andrew Miller and seconded by Councillor David Dodds

A roll call vote was taken on the composite amendment against the motion. The result was as follows :-

Motion

Alison Adamson
Bruce Fairbairn
Chris Horne
Charles Kennedy
Tom Kerr
Damian Timson

Composite Amendment

Frank Anderson
Stuart Borrowman
William Boyle
Diane Calder
Janet Campbell
Harry Cartmill
Pauline Clark
Tom Conn
Robert De Bold
Jim Dickson
David Dodds
Angela Doran
Lawrence Fitzpatrick
Carl John
Dave King
Sarah King
John McGinty
Andrew McGuire
Dom McGuire
Andrew Miller
George Paul
Moir Shemilt
Kirsteen Sullivan
David Tait

Decision

Following a vote the composite amendment was successful by 24 votes to 6, with 3 members absent, and it was agreed accordingly.