

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE) COMMITTEE held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 30 AUGUST 2022.

Present – Councillors Peter Heggie (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Stuart Borrowman, Pauline Clark, Lawrence Fitzpatrick (substituting for Councillor Ann Davidson), Moira McKee Shemilt and Sally Pattle; Appointed Member Lynne McEwen

Apologies – Councillor Ann Davidson and Appointed Members Kent Ballantyne and Margaret Russell

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 6 - Validated Self-Evaluation: Williamston Primary School

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick stated that he was a member of the Williamston Primary School Parent Council. However, having applied the objective test he considered that this did not amount to an interest and so took part in the item of business.

2. MINUTES

The committee confirmed the Minutes of its meeting held on held on 11 January 2022 as a correct record. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION: BLACKRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL -

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head Of Education (Primary, Early Learning and Resources) bringing to their attention Blackridge Primary School's quality improvement activity and identified areas for improvement for session 2022-2023. Angela Downie, Head Teacher, was in attendance to provide an update on the school's progress and to answer questions from committee members.

Following the Head Teachers presentation, the schools plan for the use of this years allocated Pupil Equity Funds (PEF) was queried with Mrs Downie explaining that, through the application of the authority's new Toolkit, clearer management and monitoring of pupils was possible for those identified as requiring support. Funding enabled staff to work with the identified pupils in order to provide targeted support which in the previous year had led to an increase in the levels achieved within the school.

Discussion continued with a question regarding the introduction of a family learning programme which had been identified as an area for improvement. The committee were informed that this would be targeted initially at the early years - primary one stage with the needs of families

identified and bespoke arrangements put in place, in particular for those pupils who had access to PEF funding.

Information on pupils' general progress was also discussed with consideration to any effects as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was explained that vulnerable pupils attending school during the pandemic had benefitted from a high adult to child ratio enabling the school to ensure no further widening of the gap particularly with regards to literacy and numeracy. The focus on these subjects had now been widened to other subjects on the curriculum. The Head Teacher also explained that where data had highlighted the need, support was adjusted, through the use of Pupil Support Assistants and the utilisation of Additional Support Needs packages. Groups would also be amalgamated where there were particularly large gaps.

The discussion concluded with a question on the new nursery building and how this had impacted the children. It was explained that the school benefitted from a great outdoor environment and the nursery space was child friendly which had created a calmer environment overall.

It was recommended that the committee note the contents of the report and the school's arrangements for continuing improvement.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

4. VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION: WILLIAMSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Primary, Early Learning and Resources) bringing to their attention Williamston's Primary School's validated self-evaluation and identified areas for improvement for session 2022-2023. Jane Livingston, Head Teacher, was in attendance to provide an update on the school's progress and to answer questions from committee members.

Committee requested further information regarding the 37% of primary 7 pupils, detailed within section D2 of the report, as having additional support needs and whether this had presented challenges. Committee were advised that a key strength of the school was their staff confidence in identifying gaps in learning examples of which included care experienced children, dyslexia and autistic spectrum. The school had identified that this particular cohort required to be targeted and an application was made for an additional teacher which was provided by the authority with some additionality from PEF funding.

Outdoor learning was noted in section D3 of the report and the Head Teacher was asked to expand on this. The committee were advised that their VSE had been towards the end of January and at that time there were still cohort bubbles with limited access. Since then, pupils had been consulted with regards to their outdoor learning and were now in a

position to go out around the school area and also had access to Williamston Woods. Furthermore, for this session, there was a teacher leading on Health and Wellbeing who was accessing the wider area and gardening allotment to develop this further for all classes.

The report detailed that for period 2020/21, 100% of pupils at primary 1 stage had achieved expected national Curriculum for Excellence Levels in reading. The Head Teacher was asked if that was accurate and while confirming that was the case explained how it had been achieved. The school benefitted from a Pupil Support Worker (PSW), trained in speech and language and vocabulary, resulting in targeted interventions at an early level with focus now moving from primary 1 to primaries 2 and 3.

The committee then asked what work was undertaken to increase parent and guardian engagement and inclusivity. In response, members were advised that the pandemic had created challenges, however, lockdown had enabled the school to contact particular families via phone calls, in order to provide one to one contact, and staff were also visible at the school gates to meet informally. Following lockdown, the opening of the school provided the opportunity for community catch-up through events such as sports day, teas and coffees within the school and in person parent council meetings. Shared finishing times for every year group had also allowed access to the school building for all groups.

Responding to a question regarding the 1+2 languages curriculum the Head Teacher explained what this involved and was open to a suggestion that the school consider Gaelic as an additional language.

Discussion concluded with a question on the lower allocation of PEF funding for a double stream primary school. It was explained that resources required to be allocated as meaningfully as possible and the school had invested heavily in; a highly skilled PSW team, two Early Years practitioners, two members of staff trained in Maths recovery approaches, investing in PSW training to upskill, nurture groups which also supported children with tailored Health and Wellbeing interventions and a raising attainment teacher. In addition, there were a number of children identified as performing beyond national expectations, hence the 100% reading result discussed earlier and for those pupils challenge and support groups were provided by the raising attainment teacher to make sure they were on track.

It was recommended that the committee note the contents of the report and the school's arrangements for continuing improvement.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

5. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS OF EDUCATION (HMIE) SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated)

by the Head of Education (Primary, Early Learning and Resources) informing of the HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) scrutiny programme for academic session 2022-23.

It was recommended that the committee note the contents of the report and the programme of scrutiny outlined by HMIE.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

6. VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION APPROACHES 2022/23

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Heads of Education informing of Education Services' planned approaches to Validated Self-evaluation (VSE) activity for 2022-2023.

It was recommended that the committee note the contents of the report and the Quality Improvement Team's approaches for supporting improvement in West Lothian schools.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

7. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan.