

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 1ST FLOOR, WEST LoTHIAN HOUSE, on TUESDAY 25 AUGUST 2009.

Present – Councillors Andrew Miller (Chair), Jim Walker (Vice Chair), Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Ellen Glass, Greg McCarra and John McGinty; Mrs Elsie Aitken.

Apology – Mrs Myra MacPherson.

1. MINUTES -

- (a) The Panel confirmed the Minute of its Special Meeting held on 4th June 2009.
- (b) The Panel confirmed the Minute of its Meeting held on 9th June 2009 subject to including Councillor McGinty's concerns that the current 2x50 minute periods of physical education per week being offered to school children in West Lothian failed to meet the Scottish Government's target of 2 hours per week.
- (c) The Panel confirmed the Minute of its Special Meeting held on 22nd June 2009.

2. SQA RESULTS 08-09 – PRE-APPEAL -

There was a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) advising of the performance of West Lothian pupils in the SQA examinations diet 2009.

Although the national pre-appeal data for diet 2009 had not yet been published, national figures for the published indicators were relatively stable and comparisons with national figures for 2008 had therefore been provided in the report. All comparison data within the report was based on the 2008 pre-appeal figures to facilitate comparisons. Higher examinations taken at West Lothian College through consortium arrangements had not been included at this stage.

The panel noted from the report information on (a) performance in S4 which was as good or better than in diet 08 and compared favourably with national averages; (b) performance in S5 based on S4 school roll where attainment had remained broadly similar to the 2008 attainment; and (c) performance in S5 based on the January S5 pupil roll where staying on levels and achieved levels had been maintained at 2008 levels. The report highlighted an increase in the number of presentations at Advanced Higher level in West Lothian, as well as an increase in the pass rate at

Advanced Higher level.

During the discussion, the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) undertook to include detailed evidence on the impact of early exam presentations in the post-appeal report when it was presented to the panel later in the year.

Decisions -

- (a) To note the terms of the report and the progress made.
- (b) To congratulate pupils, parents and teachers on the continuing improvements.
- (c) To include evidence on the impact of early exam presentations in the post-appeal exam report when it was presented to the panel later in the year.

3. REVIEW OF NURSERY ADMISSION CRITERIA -

At its meeting held on 9th June 2009, the panel had agreed to continue consideration of a report on the review of nursery admission criteria.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) recalling the review of nursery admission criteria that had been undertaken by a former head teacher of a West Lothian pre-school and outlining a list of recommendations for improvements.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the panel give further consideration to the content of report and present the recommendations outlined therein to the Council Executive for approval.

There followed a lengthy discussion arising from which additional recommendations were agreed between members of the panel. The chair stressed that this was the first step in reviewing the nursery allocation process and that further reports on the subject would be presented to the panel for further discussion in due course. Councillor McGinty wished his disappointment that catchment areas would not be adopted for pre-school placements recorded in the report to the Education Executive.

Decisions

- a. To note the terms of the report and refer it to the Education Executive for approval.
- b. Include a statement in the information sent to parents advising that reviews of nursery place allocations would be undertaken by the Customer Services Manager who had not been involved in the original determination of allocating nursery places.
- c. That the information contained in appendix 4 to the report be

presented to the panel on an annual basis.

- d. That information on the costs of providing a system of recording calls to pupil placement be included in the report to the Education Executive.
- e. That the Early Years Monitoring Group review the working on the application form to determine whether explanatory information should be provided for parents on the type of additional information that may be taken into account by the School Placement Panel (Early Years) when it was allocating nursery place.
- f. That the Early Years Monitoring Group consider involving parents in the nursery scrutiny process in the future to further increase transparency in the system
- g. That appendix 3 be re-ordered in accordance with the key principles of the report before being presented to the Education Executive.
- h. That elected members be provided with copies of pupil placement documents as and when they were updated.
- i. That members of the panel be provided with geographic area maps.