

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 8 SEPTEMBER 2009.

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

1. ST. JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

In May 2009, HM Inspectors of Schools had visited St. Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Class as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The report and main findings (which had been circulated) were published on 23rd June 2009. The following key strengths were highlighted:-

- The quality of relationships between staff and children and the care taken by all staff to promote children's welfare
- Children's good behaviour and their enthusiasm for learning
- Strong, productive partnership with parents, the local parish and the wider local community
- Successful approaches to inclusion
- Children's skills in information and communications technology, and the range of their experiences in outdoor learning
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff to school improvement

HMI had identified the following examples of good practice:

- Support for vulnerable children
- Leading change: winning hearts and minds

The following areas of improvement had been agreed with the school and education authority:-

- Continue to raise children's attainment in English language and mathematics
- Continue to improve approaches to learning and teaching to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged

HMI were confident that the school would be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, they would make no further visits to the school following the inspection. The school and education authority had prepared an action plan (which had been circulated) indicating how the main findings of the report would be

addressed, which would be shared with parents. The school and the education authority would inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

During the discussion, the Headteacher provided an overview of the school's improvement plan. The parent council representative spoke very positively of the improvements that had been made at the school in recent years and confirmed that they were happy with the findings of the HMI report.

Decisions

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. To note the school's action plan.
3. To commend the Headteacher and staff on the positive report.

2. SCHOOL REVIEW PROGRAMME SESSION 2009/10

The council had a statutory obligation to monitor the quality of education provision in its schools and to ensure high quality learning and teaching, leadership and management, with a focus on continuous improvements.

A report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) provided the panel with information on the evaluation processes carried out by Education Development and the factors that were taken into account when the school review programme was being constructed. An appendix to the report listed those schools that had undergone HMle or council reviews, Headteacher reviews, schools being prepared for HMle review, reviews of progress against action plans and where support for newly appointed or acting Headteachers had been or would be offered.

The report outlined the outcomes of the 2008/09 school review programme.

In response to a request, the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) agreed to present a report on the outcome of the follow-up review of Inveralmond Community High School to the next scrutiny meeting of the panel.

Decisions

- (a) To note the terms of the report.
- (b) That a report on the follow-up review of Inveralmond Community High School be presented to the next scrutiny meeting of the panel.

3. PROGRAMME FOR OFFICIAL OPENING CELEBRATIONS FOR NEW AND REFURBISHED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A report by the Head of Education (Development) had been circulated which provided members with information on the scope of works that had been carried out at the two new and three refurbished secondary schools; provisional completion dates of the contracts at the schools; and a suggested programme of official opening ceremonies at the schools to celebrate the successful conclusion of the projects.

It was anticipated that all five of the school building construction projects would be completed by November 2009. These were major projects which cumulatively represented an investment of £119 million by the council and Scottish Government and would radically improve the educational provision for 45% of West Lothian's secondary pupils. The new and refurbished schools programme was expected to be one of the largest school improvement programmes to take place nationally over the last few years.

It was considered appropriate by the school and council officers, that the completion of the works merited official opening ceremonies that reflected the education achievements at each school. A suggested programme of openings was provided in the appendix to the report. The format of each celebration would be the responsibility of the school, supported by Education Services. It was envisaged that the events would take place in one of the schools' high quality new spaces. There would be a programme of pupil events/displays as well as the opening celebration itself and a plaque would record the event.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the panel:

- Note the progress of the secondary school contracts
- Note the programme and format of the suggested opening ceremonies
- Refer the report to Education Executive for adoption

Councillor McGinty wished his suggestion that the opening should be conducted by Great Modern Scots on the themes of sport; science and technology; arts; and community included in the report when it was presented to the Education Executive for agreement.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and refer it to the Education Executive for approval.