

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 28 AUGUST 2018.

Present – Councillors David Dodds (Chair), Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Alison Adamson (substituting for Tom Kerr), Stuart Borrowman, Peter Heggie, John McGinty and Andrew Miller; Appointed Representatives, Elsie Aitken, Heather Hughes, Eric Lumsden, Myra MacPherson and Lynne McEwen

Apologies – Councillor Tom Kerr; and Appointed Representative Margaret Russell

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 1 May 2018. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. S5 AND S6 SCQF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2018

The Panel considered a presentation and accompanying report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) providing an update on the performance of students in attaining Scottish Curriculum and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Awards at Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) in the S5 and S6 stages and at Level 7 (Advanced Higher or equivalent, including HNC) in the S6 stage.

The panel was advised that the attainment of 5+, 3+ and 1+ SCQF Awards at Level 6 by students at the S5 stage and 1+ SCQF Award at Level 7 by students at the S6 stage remained important measures of school performance and for this reason they would continue to be reported to members on an annual basis. For completeness the attainment of 5+, 3+ and 1+ SCQF awards at Level 6 by students at the S6 stage had also been included in the report.

It was noted that over the five year period 2014 to 2018 the percentage of students attaining 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) in S5 had improved. This included West Lothian schools and students outperforming both the national average and the virtual comparator, details of which were summarised in a table in the report.

With regards to the percentage of students attaining 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6 these had also improved over the five year period 2014 to 2018. Further details were contained in a table in the report.

And finally over the five year period 2014 to 2018 the percentage of

students attaining 1+ Awards at SCQF Level had also improved however at this stage the 2018 1+ Award at SCQF Level 6 did not include all college based HNC candidate results.

The Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) advised the Panel that schools had access to the Results Service where students who had not achieved their expected grades, schools could request a remarking on their behalf. As a result of this facility the final results for 2018 could see a minor increase.

The presentation concluded by advising the Panel that a more detailed analysis of the examination results, on a school-by-school basis, would be brought to the October meeting of the Panel.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. That performance of S5 students in 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) had risen in the five year period;
2. That performance of S6 students in 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) had risen in the five year period;
3. That SCQF examination performance of S6 students in 1+ Awards at Level 7 (Advanced Higher or equivalent, including HNC) had risen in the five year period; and
4. That further detail of school-by-school performance would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To congratulate all the staff and the pupils for their hard work in achieving such excellent examination results for five successive years;
3. To note that a more detailed analysis of the examination results, on a school-by-school basis, would be brought to the October meeting of the Panel
4. To request that prior to school examination results being posted onto social media then elected members be provided with this information beforehand.

4. RAISING ATTAINMENT STRATEGY 2018-23

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) providing a draft of the new Raising Attainment Strategy, which would support the council's Corporate Plan and strategic priorities

during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23.

The draft Raising Attainment Strategy, a copy of which was attached to the report, outlined the outcomes and activities planned, which were in line with the 2018 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Ambitious and aspirational targets had been set to ensure that West Lothian continued to achieve excellence for its learners and continued to address the poverty related attainment gap.

The Raising Attainment Strategy built on previous strategies and had identified four specific outcomes as summarised :-

- Outcome One – Focus on increasing attainment and achievement for all West Lothian learners from early years to S3;
- Outcome Two – Focus on increasing equity, based on socio-economic factors, in educational outcomes across all West Lothian schools;
- Outcome Three – Focus on increasing attainment for all learners from S4-S6; and
- Outcome Four – Focus on increased equity, based on socio-economic factors, in educational outcomes for West Lothian learners in the senior phase.

Key measures of the success for the four outcomes had been identified and these would be used to track, monitor and report on performance throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

An annual review would also be undertaken and reported to the council's Corporate Management Team and to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

An end of strategy review would also be undertaken in the final year of the strategy to report on the achievement in the outcomes and final position in the performance indicators (against target) and the agreed actions.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Considers the draft Raising Attainment Strategy 2018-23; and
2. Notes that the draft Raising Attainment Strategy would be presented to the Education Executive for approval on 11 September 2018.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To agree that as part of future annual updates information relating to looked after children; children with caring responsibilities; and parental engagement be included; and

3. To note that a joint report from Education Services and Social Policy would be brought to the next meeting of the panel on the strategy for raising attainment of looked after children.

5. NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) providing an update on the progress made with the four national improvement priorities.

The report recalled that the Standards in Scotland's Schools, etc Act 2000, as amended by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 required the preparation of an annual progress report and plan setting out progress the council had made to achieve the four key priorities of the National Improvement Framework. Statutory guidance required the publication of the local plan by September 2018.

The four key priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) were :-

- To improve attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy
- To close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children
- To improve health and wellbeing
- To improve employability skills and sustained positive school leaver destinations

The report then provided a summary against each of the four priorities, with further details contained in the appendix to the report.

It was recommended that the Panel note and consider the contents of the West Lothian Progress Report which was driving forward the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

6. WEST LOTHIAN NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) providing an update on the West Lothian National Improvement Framework Improvement Plan (NIFIP), a copy of which was attached to the report.

The report recalled that the Standards in Scotland's Schools, etc Act 2000, as amended by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 required the preparation of an annual progress report and plan setting out :-

- The steps the council would be taking to achieve the four key priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF)
- The steps it would be taking to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.
- The steps it would be taking to involve a wide range of stakeholders, in the discharge of the new statutory duty (the socio-economic duty).

The West Lothian Council National Improvement Framework Improvement Plan sets out the West Lothian Council context, in line with the implementation of the Raising Attainment Strategy 2018-2023 and the transformational change achieved through the collaborative Moving Forward in Learning approach. It also set out the national context including the stretch aims agreed in partnership with Education Scotland in relation to literacy, numeracy and positive destinations.

The Plan also addressed each of the four key priorities of the National Improvement Framework in terms of the key drivers of improvement identified within the NIF.

The report concluded that the Plan demonstrated the strength of the existing coherent, strategic approach taken within West Lothian to achieving the four key priorities and set out how this would work.

It was recommended that the Panel note and consider the contents of the West Lothian National Improvement Framework Improvement Plan as the council's strategic approach to driving forward improvement in the key priorities.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

7. MANAGING CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) providing a copy of the recently updated Managing Critical Incidents in School Policy, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report recalled that such a policy had been in place in the council since 2009 and had last been reviewed in 2014.

The focus of the policy was where a critical incident involved the school community directly and personally, which typically was an incident that involved an unexpected threat of serious injury or death to a member(s) of

the school community. The term “Critical Incident” could refer to a wide range of events from major disasters to localised single events.

The aims of the policy were :-

- I. To support school managers to deal effectively with the initial stages of a Critical Incident by providing a simple reference guide
- II. To help schools recognise the needs of the whole community for emotional support
- III. To suggest ways in which these needs could be addressed in the immediate term and to signpost to resources for longer term support.

The policy had been updated to reflect the significant societal changes in relation to the use of social media and the implications that this had for managing critical incidents in schools. Renewed guidance for schools had been provided to give clear information on how best to manage this aspect of the Critical Incident process.

The Panel was asked to :-

To note and consider the following recommendation which was intended to be submitted to Education Executive for approval :-

“That the updated Policy on Managing Critical Incidents be agreed as the final updated version of this policy for all educational establishments”.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to the next appropriate meeting of the Education Executive with the recommendation that the revised policy be reviewed.

8. EDUCATION GOVERNANCE, COSLA - SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT JOINT AGREEMENT

The Panel considered a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) and the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) advising of the joint agreement reached between COSLA and the Scottish Government and the effect on West Lothian with regard to each aspect of the Joint Agreement.

The Joint Agreement concerned the shared aims of improving the education and life chances of children and young people, closing the unacceptable gap in attainment between the least the most disadvantaged children and raising attainment for all.

The Joint Agreement contained a set of agreed principles and

agreements relating to the Headteachers' Charter, Parental and Community Engagement, Pupil Participation and Regional Improvement.

The report then provided an explanation for each of the agreed principles and included a summary of the position with these in West Lothian.

The report concluded that it was to be welcomed that further legislation was not necessary to achieve the shared aims of raising attainment and that the Joint Agreement recognised the value of local authority contribution to improvement planning aligned to their funding responsibilities and in raising attainment.

The Panel were asked to note and consider the joint agreement reached between COSLA and the Scottish Government on Education Governance and the current position in West Lothian with regard to each aspect of the Joint Agreement.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

9. DYSLEXIA ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) providing an overview of practice in schools related to the assessment and identification of dyslexia.

The report recalled that at the request of Council, at its meeting held on 16 January 2018, a review of current practice in relation to the recording of assessment and identification processes for Dyslexia took place across West Lothian schools. Following this request a full consultation was undertaken by officers and all Headteachers.

The consultation highlighted that the majority of schools were effectively implementing the Dyslexia Toolkit in line with Scottish Government guidance. The steps of assessing and putting support in place were robust however the recording of the identification of dyslexia on SEEMIS records was not necessarily consistently applied across schools.

Following the review a session with all Head Teachers was undertaken to re-visit the Dyslexia Toolkit and emphasise the importance of the recording aspects within SEEMIS.

The existing guidance for schools was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and was considered to be robust and in line with Scottish Government guidance as outlined in the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit which was a nationally recognised resource developed through multi agency liaison. West Lothian schools had been advised to adopt and implement the guidance contained in the resource to assist them in this work.

Following revised advice provided to schools regarding the recording of the identification of Dyslexia within SEEMIS, 7.3% of West Lothian

mainstream pupils had a formal identification of Dyslexia. This figure was seen as an accurate representation of levels of Dyslexia in West Lothian. Further information was contained in the report with regards to the very effective practices that were being implemented to meet the literacy needs of identified pupils.

The report concluded that schools in West Lothian were supported through a range of guidance tools, specific support services and training to assess and identify Dyslexia and that ongoing monitoring and review of processes would take place through annual Quality Improvement activities.

The Panel were asked to note that on 16 January 2018 Council resolved that officers bring a report back to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel in relation to current practice in schools related to the identification of and support for pupils with Dyslexia.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. EDUCATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Panel considered a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) and the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) presenting a copy of the Education Services Management Plan for 2018-19, a copy of which was attached to the report.

The plan provided an overview of :-

- The services and activities that Education Services provided;
- The aims and objectives of the service that were to be communicated to elected members, staff and partners;
- How success would be measured and the targets that were to be achieved; and
- The improvement activities that the service was committed to completing in order to change or improve services.

The Management Plan would be utilised by the management team and stakeholders to assess and gauge performance and improvement.

The Panel were asked to note the Education Service Management Plan for 2018-19.

Decision

To note the contents of the report and Education Services Management Plan.

11. WORKPLAN

A copy of the work plan had been circulated for information.

In light of the earlier discussion on raising attainment for looked after children this would be included on the workplan for reporting back to the Panel later in the year.

And finally in relation to a question the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) confirmed that an update on the instrumental music service would be reported later in the year, once sufficient data had been collected and analysed.

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan