

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE) COMMITTEE held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 7 MARCH 2023.

Present – Councillors Peter Heggie (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Tony Boyle, Pauline Clark, Moira McKee Shemilt and Sally Pattle; and Appointed Member Kent Ballantyne

Apologies – Councillor Stuart Borrowman and Appointed Member Lynne McEwen

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTES

The committee confirmed the Minutes of its meeting held on 17 January 2023 as a correct record. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT: DEANS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head Of Education (Secondary, Community Learning and Inclusion) informing of the outcome of the Education Scotland (HMI) inspection at Deans Community High School. Pauline Allison, Headteacher, was in attendance to provide an update on the school's progress.

The inspection team had identified the following areas for improvement; to continue to improve the consistency of learning, teaching and assessment and to improve the quality of young people's success and focus specifically on attainment in literacy. A number of questions were asked of the Headteacher in relation to these areas for improvement, the strengths found in the school's work and the contents of the report.

During the discussion, the Headteacher advised that staff were provided with in-service professional development opportunities. Where some staff members were involved in more intense training, the content would subsequently be cascaded to other staff members. Good teaching practice was also shared between colleagues as a result of some lessons being recorded, which enabled both the observation of pupil participation levels and the exemplification of good practice.

In relation to literacy, the Headteacher explained that staffing in the English department had been particularly difficult in 2019. However, the department had turned this around and the resulting decline in the subject's uptake, specifically in relation to English Higher, had recently

increased from 48% to 73%. Part of the school's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation was also being used to address this subject with work undertaken that included school cluster colleagues and a focus on S1 and S2 reading.

In concluding the discussion, the committee were informed that the school worked closely with the Quality Improvement Team to improve learning and teaching and attainment. The individual subject support that was made available was well received by staff. The Quality Improvement Team also worked with the school's middle leadership team to improve the leadership of learning and to ensure an understanding of HMI standards.

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 and the update from the Headteacher.

4. EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT: OUR LADY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC) SETTING

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head Of Education (Primary, Early Years and Resources) informing of the outcome of the Education Scotland (HMI) Inspection at Our Lady's Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Setting. Claire McGoldrick, Headteacher, was in attendance to provide an update on the school's progress.

The inspection team had identified the following areas for improvement; to capture the wider range of skills children develop as a result of their learning across the curriculum and for teachers to develop approaches to high quality assessments in order to continue to increase attainment across the school. A number of questions were asked of the Headteacher in relation to these areas for improvement, the strengths found in the school's work and the contents of the report.

The Headteacher was asked for further information regarding the supports in place for pupils identified as requiring extra help. The committee were informed that a wide range of interventions were in place for health and well-being, literacy and numeracy. The school's well-equipped pupil support team carried out a lot of these interventions, with staff engaged in high-quality learning to ensure the best support available.

In response to a question regarding the drop in reading and writing levels, for both 2020/21 and 2021/22, it was explained that although the pandemic had an impact, the very small cohort meant the results of one or two children could cause a high percentage change. However, the data was important in identifying the interventions required to support children's progress, which led to the utilisation of PEF funding to employ a literacy pedagogy officer.

Moving on, the Headteacher advised that discussion had taken place with the inspectorate with regard to enabling children to apply and demonstrate skills in new and unfamiliar contexts. This resulted in the planned use of outdoor spaces within the area to provide contextualised opportunities for children to apply their learning in a different environment outside the school.

Having been asked about the reintroduction of leadership opportunities for children, the Headteacher provided examples of those available such as Reader Leaders, Maths Champions and Health and Wellbeing Champions. Pupils were aware of their impact in driving forward improvement within the school and were active participants in the self-evaluation process.

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 and the update from the Headteacher.

5. VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION: SOUTHDAL PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

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

Clarification was sought on the Acting Principal's post remaining as an acting position given the length of time they had been in the role. The Headteacher explained that this additional post was financed through PEF funding, which was allocated by the Scottish Government annually, and was therefore not a permanent funding stream.

It was then asked, given that the Acting Principal Teachers post was funded by PEF, how their role contributed to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, which was the purpose of this funding source. The committee were informed that the post holder's overall strategic remit was to; identify children who required additional support or challenge, to support and challenge class teachers and to work with, and upskill, Pupil Support Workers so that they could provide pupils with the supports identified.

The Primary 7 attainment figures were highlighted and the Headteacher asked if there had been an issue with this particular cohort. In response, it was explained that attainment was raised through the application of tracking and monitoring procedures with writing interventions also put in place. In addition, a literacy pedagogy officer, funded by PEF, had worked

with staff to help identify the supports required.

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 and the update from the Headteacher.

6. VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION: ST NINIAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Primary Schools, Early Years, and Resources) bringing to their attention St Ninian's Primary School and ELC's validated self-evaluation (VSE) and identified areas for improvement for session 2022-2023.

It was noted that 18% of learners within the school had English as an additional language and the Headteacher informed committee members that there were nine different languages spoken. Interventions enabled these students to flourish and two further languages were also learned throughout their time in the school, through the 1 + 2 Approach to language learning.

The transition arrangements, for pupils moving from primary to secondary school, was queried and it was explained that this was considered from Primary 5 onwards. St Margaret's teachers had been involved in the VSE and attended the primary school to deliver lessons as part of the transition programme. Information was shared to ensure learning and curricular transition was in place for those who required support or challenge when moving schools.

Returning to the subject of learners who had English as an additional language, the Headteacher was asked what the school did to make the school welcoming for a diverse range of children. It was explained that relationships and working with families began in nursery to give a sense of belonging at an early stage.

The school's scores were higher than those of the local authority and, given the number of languages spoken in the school, it was asked how this was achieved. The Headteacher informed committee members of the school's relentless focus, maintained over a long period of time and that it had the highest expectations for its learners. Knowing families, removing barriers, and enhancing the pupil's unique personalities and strengths ensured the supports required were in place.

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 and the update from the Headteacher.

7. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

The committee were informed that the St Kentigern's Academy VSE, detailed on the workplan as due to be reported on 6 June 2023, had been postponed until the 2023-24 school term in order to allow the school time to prepare.

Decision

1. To note the workplan; and
2. To note the St Kentigern's Academy VSE had been postponed and would take place during the 2023-24 school term.