

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL
CHAMBER, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS,
NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS on Thursday,
24 September 2015 at 10.00 am.

Present:- Councillors G Logan (Chairman), W Archibald, I Gillespie, A J Nicol,
S Mountford, R Stewart, J Torrance.

Apologies: Councillor K Cockburn.

Also Present: Councillors S Aitchison, J Greenwell.

In Attendance:- Service Director Strategy & Policy, Service Director Children & Young People,
Chief Officer Education Services, Principal Psychologist (Mr R Barrow),
Headteacher Hawick High School (Mr K McClory), Headteacher, Drumlanrig
Primary School (Ms J Gordon), Headteacher - Clovenfords and Stow Primary
Schools (Ms A Findlay), Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (J
Turnbull).

1. MINUTE

- 1.1 There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 20 August 2015.

DECISION

NOTED for signature by the Chairman.

- 1.2 With reference to paragraph 2.7 of the Minute on Non Schooling and Home Schooling and the amount of maintenance allowance payable to parents who were home educating their child/children, the Service Director Children and Young People advised that this information would be provided to Members by the end of the week.

DECISION

NOTED.

2. ATTAINMENT LEVELS IN SCHOOLS IN DEPRIVED AREAS

- 2.1 With reference to paragraph 6(a)(iv) of the Minute of 26 March 2015, the Chairman welcomed Ms Donna Manson, Service Director Children and Young People. Mr Kevin McClory, Headteacher Hawick High School; Ms J Gordon, Headteacher, Drumlanrig Primary School and Ms A Findlay, Headteacher, Clovenfords and Stow Primary Schools were also present at the meeting to give a presentation on Attainment Levels in Schools in Deprived Areas. There had been circulated copies of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report – Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education; Raising the Attainment for All Vision document and Closing the Gap leaflet.
- 2.2 Mr McClory began by stating that his presentation focused on Hawick High School, as this was located in the most deprived area in the Scottish Borders with 30% of pupils in SIMD 1 and 2. Mr McClory explained that the key reasons for rising child poverty included cuts to welfare benefits, low pay and lack of secure employment. However, teachers could make a difference in how poverty impacted on children and young people by taking action to remove barriers which pupils from low income families faced at school. Mr McClory referred to statistical information which showed Hawick High School in relation to other schools in the Scottish Borders. As Hawick High School was the only school named on the two slides, with the others anonymised, Members requested that these two slides be re-issued to them with the names of the schools on the graphs. The statistics showed that staying on rates had dramatically increased. Although the school provided opportunities, such as an inclusive curriculum, this demonstrated that pupils were concerned about future opportunities. Free meal entitlement (FME) had also increased by 13.9%. Mr McClory went on to advise that the school had carried out a Values Consultation with teachers, parents and pupils which had determined the key values for Hawick High

School to be Determination, Ambition, Respect and Effort. The school had also decided on a motto – ‘Dare to Dream, Dare to Succeed’; everything the school did was now based around this motto. Mr McClory continued that the school had used a risk matrix to profile pupils from their first year to their final year. This had enabled the school to monitor pupils and determine those at risk of being disengaged from the learning process.

- 2.3 Mr McClory advised that Deprivation Funding had been used to address barriers to learning caused by difficulties in accessing appropriate school resources (school stationery, equipment, clothing and supplementing school trips). The Funding also enabled the school to provide coaching and mentoring programmes for disadvantaged and underachieving pupils; supported children so that they became fully engaged in school and community life; delivered parental engagement programmes and delivered innovative learning experiences which raised educational attainment, promoted attendance and encouraged positive engagement. The school had also introduced systems to address the attainment gap with targeted support, assertive mentoring and supported study. Mr McClory continued by referring to statistical information which showed that in Hawick High School the number of ½ days lost due to temporary exclusion had reduced by more than 50% over the previous two years. There was also improvement in literacy, numeracy and an increase in positive destinations for pupils leaving school.
- 2.4 In answer to Members’ questions, Ms Manson advised that all Members were about to be invited into schools for an in depth analysis of the statistics pertaining to their local school(s). She would also circulate a more detailed breakdown of deprivation in each locality. Ms Michelle Strong, Chief Officer Education Services, was also in attendance at the meeting and explained that the criteria for placing children into dociles was based on a national set of criteria including postcode and rurality. Ms Strong further explained that developmental parental skills commenced prior to the child starting school through learning and childcare centres. Parents were also targeted at this time to build relationships that would continue throughout the child’s education. Ms Manson added that information from Health Visitors identified families that required targeted programmes and intensive support. The Home School Workers were important as they became the link between the school and the parent. Councillor Aitchison, Executive Member for Education, was in attendance and encouraged Members to attend and become involved in their local Parent Council meetings and to promote parental involvement, as well as becoming more involved in corporate parenting.
- 2.5 Ms A Findlay, Headteacher, then gave a presentation on attainment levels in Clovenfords and Stow Primary Schools. Ms Findlay began by stating that unlike Hawick, Clovenfords and Stow on paper would not appear to be in an area of deprivation. However, deprivation did still exist within the community, and they had equal barriers to overcome such as domestic violence, substance misuse within families. Ms Findlay explained that on raising attainment in numeracy with respect to Stow, the school had categorised children into three levels (RAG status) and staff had been concerned when this showed a quarter of children below national indicators. The school identified these children and, using a methodology approach, introduced targeted support. Initially they had targeted one child in the school, giving one to one support, for 15 minutes, three times a week and one session of 30 minutes. The school measured the child’s accuracy, speed and support and this gave detailed information on how they were progressing. The school had now witnessed a significant improvement in every single child participating in the programme. The children continued to be monitored in the classroom and teachers had commented that the children showed more resilience, confidence and were no longer anxious. The programme also increased parental involvement and built an approach of success and ethos within the school. Ms Manson added that the Scottish Government had introduced a Raising Attainment fund. In the Scottish Borders, two schools had been awarded funding and all headteachers could participate in the training. Ms J Gordon, Headteacher, advised that in Drumlanrig Primary School, their project on improving writing skills had started by targeting two children before increasing the numbers involved to a group. However, when the programme moved to the next stage - the whole class - they found that there were too many distractions and some pupils did not perform well. They now had targeted smaller groups and this had resulted in raising of skills, attainment and building confidence. Members were advised that there was a big effort in action learning, with the challenge to get the right ‘hook’ for the children to get them interested in learning and keeping that interest to extend their learning.

- 2.6 In answer to questions, Ms Finlay advised that Stow Primary School had received no additional resources, but this had been about a different approach and instead they had reorganised what they had. For example, the Additional Needs Auxiliary had gone into a classroom for one hour and tried to assist as many children as possible. The school then divided this into targeted support of 4 x 15 minute sessions for individual children and were seeing progress. Ms Gordon advised that Drumlanrig had received Deprivation Funding and this had been used to enable the school to support children and break down barriers. All the headteachers agreed that if additional resources were available this would be utilised to provide additional staffing.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation and that Members would shortly be invited to meetings on the attainment data for schools in their own Wards.

3. MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS.

- 3.1 With reference to paragraph 6(a)(ix) of the Minute of 26 March 2015, the Chairman welcomed Mr Roger Barrow, Principal Psychologist, to the meeting to give a presentation on Mainstream Schools and Children with Complex Additional Support Needs. There had been circulated the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 and 2009; Implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) and the Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice. Mr Barrow also circulated a private paper at the meeting showing the number of pupils in each resource for additional support needs. Mr Barrow began his presentation by advising that the New Bill increased the emphasis in terms of the rights of children and young people. The complexities required to be addressed for Additional Support Needs (ASN) included children with motor or sensory impairments, learning disabilities, having emotional or social difficulties, living with parents who were abusing substances or had mental health problems. Mr Barrow advised that in the Scottish Borders 25% of children required ASN rather than the national average of 21%. Mr Barrow continued that the Scottish Borders was the fourth most rural local authority and had not a developed school infrastructure which characterised many larger city services. However, with a large number of small schools they had developed support which could be flexibly deployed for a wide range of needs over time. Mr Barrow emphasised that the main point was not the specific label attached to a child but the nature of the provision for that child. There was a wide range of services available to support the child including the Educational Psychology Service, Sensory Team, Spectrum support and the Complex Needs Transition Service which was specifically for older children to support their transition to college. Mr Barrow went on to discuss dyslexia which had increased through the years. One of the reasons for this was that the Scottish Government had introduced a definition of dyslexia which had a much broader base than previously. Mr Barrow summarised the main duties of the Additional Needs Multi-agency Team (ANMaT) which included policy and practice guidance and protocols. Mr Barrow concluded his presentation by advising that they were focusing on inclusion and the reintegration of children with ASN within education, the provision of two new positions, one senior lead officer for ASN and a lead officer for inclusion would assist with this project.
- 3.2 Ms Manson clarified that ASN had previously been located under Social Work services but was now being managed in the new structure in Education services. It was important to learn from strategies to ensure that they targeted the right level of support to the individual child. It was vital that every member of staff working with children with ASN had the necessary training and skills to do so. A framework of indicators was in place to measure school performance, one of the key areas being inclusion and working with families. In answer to Members' questions Ms Manson advised that there were discussions taking place about the future of Howdenburn School and whether that service could be provided within mainstream schools, which would mean less travel for some children. Feedback was required on what was working and how to co-ordinate this with the plans for Duns, Earlston and Langlee, and further discussions would take place with Headteachers, Members, parents, etc. Ms Manson shared the same vision as headteachers: a commitment for every child to be educated in their own local schools. In terms of moving forward with this aim they were engaging with councillors and sharing ideas on the best use of resources. She confirmed that there was a small number of pupils who had to go out of the area to have their needs met – this could be education or care needs or a mixture of both. Mr Barrow advised that there was a small Spectrum Support Team and they prepared training for teachers every year. There was also the opportunity for staff to visit the Autism Spectrum Resource for guidance. In terms of allocation of resources, Ms Manson explained that at the

moment resources were allocated for the year but this was being reviewed to involve Head Teachers more so that when a pupil no longer required support, the resource could be moved on to someone who did. There were enough resources in place to train teachers and it was hoped to now develop the system further with greater involvement from Head Teachers. The presumption was to welcome all children into their local schools, including those with ASN. Future consultations on services would be undertaken using the Council's Consultation Framework.

- 3.3 The Committee thanked all officers for attending and for the informative presentations. Members were impressed by the commitment of the education team to the children of the Scottish Borders.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

4. **SCRUTINY REVIEWS – UPDATE ON SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN THE FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME**

With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 20 August 2015, there had been circulated an updated list of subjects which the Scrutiny Committee had asked to review and which included the source of the request, the stage the process had reached and the date, identified, of the Scrutiny meeting at which the information would be presented. It was noted that the next Scrutiny Committee would review the Religious Observance Policy and Faith Schools. The Clerk to the Council advised that the Petitions and Deputations Committee would be considering a petition on the Great Tapestry of Scotland at its next meeting on 1 October 2015. It was agreed to present an update to the next Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of that Petitions and Deputations Committee meeting. Scrutiny Committee would then agree whether or how it would progress any further review as requested by Etrick and Yarrow Community Council.

DECISION

AGREED

- (a) **the proposed list of subject for review by Scrutiny Committee, as appended to the Minute and any further actions detailed against particular reviews;**
- (b) **to present an update to the next Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the Petitions and Deputations Committee consideration of the petition on the Great Tapestry of Scotland and to consider whether or how to progress any further review by Scrutiny; and**
- (c) **to advise Etrick and Yarrow Community Council that an update would be presented to the next Scrutiny Committee.**

The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm