

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION
COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells
on Tuesday, 25 November 2014 at 10 a.m.

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), M. Ballantyne, G. Edgar, F. Renton, G. Turnbull, Dr. K. Forman, Mr. J. Walsh, Mr. G. Jarvie, Mr G. Donald, Mrs A. Ramcharran.

Also Present:- Councillor G. Logan

Apologies:- Councillor C. Bhatia, V. Davidson, B. Herd, T. Weatherston.

In Attendance:- Depute Chief Executive – People, Service Director Children and Young People, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson).

MINUTE

1. The Minute of meeting of 2 September 2014 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

UPDATE

2. With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 2 September 2014, The Depute Chief Executive – People advised that it had been too early to evaluate the impact of the implementation of the Asymmetric Week in Scottish Borders Schools. It was therefore proposed that the evaluation be carried out in January 2015, which would allow four months of data to be analysed and a report be considered by the Committee in March 2015.

DECISION

AGREED to defer the update of the implementation of the Asymmetric week until March 2015.

MINUTE

3. The Minute of Meeting of the Education Performance (HME) Sub-Committee of 4 September 2014 had been circulated.

DECISION

NOTED.

UPDATE ON EARLY YEARS

4. With reference to paragraph 7 of the Education Committee Minute of 14 January 2014, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People which updated the Committee on the progress of Early Learning and Childcare in Scottish Borders Council. The report explained that Early Learning and Childcare would be the term applied to what was previously known as pre-school and ante pre-school. 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare provision as set out within the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 had been delivered for 3 and 4 year olds and the provision had been extended to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare for eligible 2 year olds. It was further explained that from August 2014, 2 year olds who were looked after, in a kinship care order or subject to a guardianship order were also entitled to 600 hours of early learning and childcare. In addition to places available through private and voluntary groups, provision had been created within Trinity, Howdenburn, Balmoral and Edenside Primary Schools and spaces at Philiphaugh, Burnfoot and Langlee Early Years Centres would create further

capacity. The Scottish Childminding Association were revising partnership support to secure high quality childminders to also deliver early learning and childcare for eligible two year olds. From August 2015, 2 year old children in families currently entitled to free school meals would become eligible for 600 hours of early Learning childcare. A number of alterations to the infrastructure within council run Early Learning and Childcare settings had been required to comply with Care Inspectorate requirements for 2 year old provision and these had been completed. A programme of consultation would be carried out with parent groups from January 2015 and the Early Years Team would work with all providers to ensure implementation of Building the Ambition – National Practice Guidance and Statutory guidance on Early Learning and childcare, launched in August 2014.

5. The process of commissioning with private and voluntary groups was being reviewed and Staffing for early learning and childcare in local authority provision would also be reviewed to meet the changing needs of the service. The Early Years Centre at Langlee, Galashiels was officially opened on the 6th of November 2014 and Members requested a report on the operation of the new Early Years Centre at a future meeting. Members sought clarification with regard to the funding and for the proposed extension of the provision in the future and were advised that it had been fully funded by the Government to date and any future extension would also require to be funded by the Government. In response to concerns raised in terms of The Hub and Burnfoot Primary School providing overlapping services, it was confirmed that there had been dialogue with the Hub Committee and there would be further discussions regarding provision in that area.

DECISION

(a) NOTED:-

- (i) the content of the report and progress of work across Early Years Service; and**
- (ii) the change of term from Nursery to Early Learning & Childcare.**

(b) AGREED:-

- (i) to a further report being brought early in the new year with recommendations on changes to staffing structures in early learning and childcare settings and procurement arrangements for private and voluntary partner providers.**
- (ii) that a report on the Early Years Centre at Langlee be presented to the Committee in March 2015.**

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SQA) EXAMINATION RESULTS 2014

6. With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 2 September 2014, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People, which proposed that the Education Committee agree to note the 2014 SQA Attainment data, the introduction of a new national tool 'INSIGHT' to benchmark attainment against comparator and national performance data and to agree to a further report in 2015. The report provided an interim overview of the 2014 SQA results on a cohort basis, structured around two local benchmarking measures aimed at : Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy (% of candidates attaining Literacy and Numeracy) and Improving attainment for all (Average Total Tariff score distribution). The main analysis of 2014 attainment and achievement for secondary schools would be published at the end of February 2015 (when data on school leavers would be available from Skills Development Scotland). The report explained that until 2013, Standard Tables and Charts were the main performance evaluation tool for schools and education authorities, published by the Scottish Government using SQA examination results. This had been replaced in 2014 with a new online tool named INSIGHT which was designed to analyse, compare and improve performance of young people in the senior phase. INSIGHT promoted a collaborative approach to analysing the data and working together to improve attainment and achievement and was designed to be easier and more intuitive to use and importantly be useful and accessible to all teachers in secondary schools.

INSIGHT went beyond SQA attainment and included a wide range of Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework credited awards and programmes. This was consistent with Curriculum for Excellence ethos as it emphasised the best achievement at the point of exit from school, rather than at stage-by-stage level (S4, S5, S6). INSIGHT allowed users to drill down to cohort, level, subject or socio-demographic characteristics of pupils. In summary, the evidence showed a mixed pattern at S4 with further work required to improve this. Attainment was showing a consistently improving trend at S5 level in Literacy and Numeracy but was still lower than the Virtual Comparator (7%) and slightly lower (2%) than the national Performance.

7. Concern was raised in terms parental concern regarding the level of pupil performance and the feeling that only studying 6 subjects as opposed to the previous 8 subjects was not a good deal. Parents were likely to be concerned with these figures if they were not given a full explanation of the change of emphasis on the depth of learning provided. It was explained that Universities were already discounting achievement in S4 and studying fewer subjects gave a better opportunity for a strong performance at Higher to proceed to University courses. It was noted that there would be a close focus on STEM subjects as employers were looking for these. This might require the upgrading of science labs and IT facilities in some schools.

DECISION

(a) NOTED:-

- (i) the content of the report and the achievements of students in this year's SQA examinations**
- (ii) the introduction of the national benchmarking tool, 'Insight'**

- (b) AGREED that a further report in the first quarter of 2015 on the overall performance of the 2014 Scottish Borders Council school leavers as highlighted in INSIGHT's first annual report on the performance of schools in the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examinations of 2014.**

UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

8. With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of 10 September 2013, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children & Young people which provided Members with an update on progress in implementation of Curriculum for Excellence within schools in the Scottish Borders and detailed the planned next steps to ensure full implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence outlined in the report. It was explained that curriculum and assessment arrangements across Scotland had been transformed over the past 10 years through the 'Curriculum for Excellence' programme. All schools and educational centres were expected to have Curriculum for Excellence approaches and arrangements in place, including; the structures of Broad General Education and Senior Phase, the eight curricular areas that covered all subjects in primary and secondary schools and the assessment arrangements from 3-18 (with the new Highers and Advanced Highers being implemented over sessions 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively). With the introduction of the new Highers and Advanced Highers, Curriculum for Excellence implementation would be completed and should move into the 'business as usual mode'. The report detailed the progress to date and the further implementation.
9. Mrs Ramcharran expressed grave concern that there did not appear to be a route for Parents to express dissatisfaction with the Education being provide by Scottish Borders Council and had anecdotal evidence of people moving form the area because the Education system within the area was not delivering what they required. The Depute Chief Executive – People explained the process for raising issues and how this could be escalated if parents were not satisfied with the responses received. The Chairman proposed that he and officers meet with Mrs Ramcharran at a future date to discuss how her concerns might best be addressed.

With regard to the use of GLOW in schools it was proposed that the Committee receive a demonstration of how this operated at their next meeting.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the content of the report and progress of work to implement the Curriculum for Excellence within Scottish Borders.**
- (b) **AGREED:-**
 - (i) **to commend secondary schools for the intensity of work involved in implementing the new national qualifications;**
 - (ii) **that a demonstration of GLOW be given to the Committee in January 2015; and**
 - (iii) **to approve the programme or further implementation.**

MEMBER

Mr. Donald left the meeting

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS POLICY

10. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People which set out a refreshed and revised parental Involvement Policy for Scottish Borders Council replacing the existing policy approved in 2006. In light of issues raised above, the Chairman proposed that the item be deferred until he had met with Mrs Ramcharran and then presented for consideration at the next meeting in January 2015.

DECISION

AGREED that the matter be deferred until the next meeting in January 2015.

UPDATE ON PILOT OF ONLINE PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOLS

11. The Senior Manager – Business and Strategy & Resources (Jason McDonald) together with the Project Manager (Steven Fotheringham) were present at the meeting to update Members on the pilot of online payments for schools which was part of the Business Transformation Project. It was explained that Selkirk High School, Philiphaugh Primary School and Knowepark Primary School were taking part in a 6 month project for Parents to be able to make online payments for School Trips, School Meals etc. The evaluation was ongoing and to date was very positive – with the uptake by parents making online payments being 37%, 47% and 69% respectively for the 3 schools. Mr Fotheringham reported that it was technically possible to roll the project out to all schools once an evaluation had been carried out. The scheme was a hosted solution provided by “Parent Pay” using existing school IT provision. To date only Knowepark Primary school had reported significant reductions in administration but a full evaluation would be provided at the end of the pilot.

DECISION

NOTED the progress of the pilot to date and that a further report would be presented to the Committee prior to the end of the pilot.

URGENT BUSINESS

12. Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraph should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to keep Members informed.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

13. The Chairman advised that Scottish Borders Council, at its meeting on 30 October 2014, had agreed to amend the Council's decision making structure. It was explained that it had been agreed when the existing committee structure had been introduced that it would be reviewed after 18 months of operation. This review process had resulted in the conclusion that, while

the current structure for committees had some strengths, Members had highlighted a number of significant issues that required to be addressed. The new Scheme of Administration did not have a separate Education Committee. However, the Executive Committee would meet on a themed basis and when the meeting was considering Education related business as its main theme, the Executive membership would include three persons interested in the promotion of religious education appointed in accordance with Section 124 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended by Section 31 of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, two teachers in the employment of the Council appointed as non-voting members by the Council from nominations to be made in accordance with Appendix B to the Scheme, and two representatives from Parent Councils, one from the Primary Sector, and one from the Secondary Sector. These meetings would be chaired by the Councillor appointed as the Executive Member for Education. The Clerk to the Council would be writing to all non-council members detailing the new arrangements. The date of the next meeting was 20 January 2015.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

The meeting concluded at 12.10 p.m.