

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the EDUCATION
SUB-COMMITTEE held in Council Chamber,
Council HQ, Newtown St Boswells - Blended
on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 at 10.00 am

- Present: - Councillors L. Douglas (Chair), J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton,
N. Richards, C. Ramage, S. Scott, A. Smart, F. Sinclair, Pam Rigby (Youth
Engagement Worker), M. Docherty (Religious Representatives), A. Hood
(Religious Representative), Eliza Bevan (Pupil Representative), Daniel
Newsam (Pupil Representative), Bruce McDougall (Pupil Representative),
C. Clements, (Teacher Representatives.)
- Apologies: - Councillor A. Orr. N. York (Teacher Representative).
- In Attendance: - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Chief Education
Officer, Equality Improvement Manager, Senior Lead Officers –
Education
(G. Frew, G. McKenzie, J. Bewsey), Democratic Services Officer (F.
Henderson).

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which included members of the Sub-Committee and those watching via the Live Stream, and outlined how the meeting would be conducted.

2. **MINUTES**

There had been circulated copies of the Minutes of the Education Sub Committee held on 5 October 2023 and 24 October 2023.

DECISION

AGREED the Minutes of the 5 October and 24 October for signature by the Chairman.

3. **SCOTTISH BORDERS REVISED ADMISSIONS POLICY**

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, the purpose of which was to seek approval of the revised Admissions Policy (2024) which covered Enrolment to Primary and Secondary Schools; Placement requests; and class sizes and composite classes. The report explained that the Policy responded to and sat within the context of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, along with the associated amendments and guidance for these Acts.
- 3.2 Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended, it was the duty of the Education and Lifelong Learning Service to provide an adequate and efficient school education for all children living within the Scottish Borders Council area. The report highlighted the significant changes to the previous policy.
- 3.4 In response to a question about Families finding an appropriate school when English was not their first language, Ms McKenzie explained where the information could be found and that translation services were available where required.

With reference to paragraph 7.8.5, Councillor Sinclair requested that this be reworded as it reads as if the child would require to move school.

In response to a question about the creation of composite classes, Ms McKenzie confirmed that it was the sole responsibility of the Headteacher. In terms of composite classes, it was acknowledged that composite classes can cause anxiety amongst parents, however Headteachers take great care in creating composite classes, ensuring that friendship groups were taken into account. Mrs Munro advised that gender balance had been removed from the policy for a number of reasons, one of them being to protect friendship groups. It was acknowledged that communication with parents could be improved with better explanations of what a composite class would look like and the benefits for children within them.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

(a) Agreed that the wording of para 7.8.5 be amended to read:-

If during the course of a school session, a family moves house to another catchment area but wish their child to remain at the original school, parents would become liable for any transport costs. Any siblings not already at the school would need to be considered as an out of catchment placement request.

(a) the changes to the Policy;

(b) that the revised Policy be implemented as of February 2024; and

(c) that the Policy be reviewed and updated, if required, by December 2026.

4. AYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

In Attendance: - Ms Jill Horsburgh (Headteacher), James Bewsey (Quality Improvement Officer).

4.1 The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Ayton Primary School.

HMIE report

4.2 There had been circulated copies of a report on His Majesty's Inspector of Education (HMIE) Reports for Ayton Primary School and the Improvement Plan developed by the Headteacher to address the key recommendations. The report explained that Ayton Primary School was inspected using a 'full' inspection model, which means that 4 key quality indicators were inspected in the Primary School over a 5-day period. The HMIE Report evaluated the primary provision as good, across all quality indicators. The evaluation gradings range given by HMIE on school inspections can range from unsatisfactory to excellent. A grading of very good indicated there were major strengths in this aspect of the school's work. Gradings of good indicated there are important strengths with areas for improvement in this aspect of the school's work.

4.3 The following areas for improvement identified and discussed with the Headteacher and representatives from Scottish Borders Council a) the very welcoming children and staff who make Ayton Primary School a happy place to learn. Caring and nurturing relationships between all staff and children ensure children feel safe and engage well in learning b) the Headteacher provided strong leadership for the school community and was driving forward school improvements well. In her short

time in post, the positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes was evident c) the recent improvements in digital learning approaches which were leading to children using technology effectively to enhance and extend their learning and d) The positive steps in raising attainment of children across the school, particularly in reading, listening and talking and numeracy.

- 4.4 The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Headteacher and a representative from Scottish Borders Council a) Senior leaders and teachers should continue to improve high quality learning and teaching across the school, which should include increased opportunities for children to lead and review their learning b) develop a robust strategic overview of children's additional support needs across the school. This would ensure all staff were confident in the range of supports used in Ayton Primary School to meet learner's needs and help senior leaders to evidence more clearly the positive impact of the support children receive and c) Senior leaders improve the recording and tracking of data and measure and close gaps in children's learning more effectively.
- 4.5 Ms Horsburgh explained that Ayton Primary School was located in the heart of the village, near to the playing fields, children's play park and the bowling club which was another key part of the village for many residents. Ayton was a village of over 500 residents and the new housing estate which was completed after 2020 had provided housing to younger residents in the local community. Ayton Primary was part of the Eyemouth Learning Community and was one of five a feeder Primary Schools to Eyemouth High School. At the time of the inspections there were seventy children attending the school, organised into 3 composite classes, there was no ELC provision in the school. The Headteacher and the P4/5 Teacher are nurtured trained and the Teachers I P1-3 and P6-& were undertaking nurture training to help support and better meet the needs of children who required bespoke interventions. The school provided the conditions for children to be active and engaged, by tailoring learning to the needs of a range of learners, differentiating appropriately. Children experience a broad range of learning experiences, including regular opportunities to apply learning in different contexts. Visitors to the school would see this clearly through the quality of the teaching and learning and adult interactions supporting the children in their learning. For some children developing a growth mindset was helping them and staff know their children well and work with families to improve outcomes for all. The staff and children were benefitting from being a partner school with nearby Reston Primary School, which was clear from professional development of the teaching staff and entitlements provided.
- 4.6 The staff team were clear about the direction of the school and as a team were committed to move the school forward for their learners and the community. Two of the teachers lived just outside the village and all of the teachers knew what was important and what was needed, and the school was entering an exciting time for change and challenge at a pace. The school would continue to take partners and parents on their journey to move the school from being good to very good.
- 4.7 Although not present, Amy Meek, Parent Council Chair had submitted a statement, in which she explained that it had been a privilege to work alongside the school throughout the inspection and the report from the inspection and the communication from the Head Teacher was very informative and positive. As a parent from Ayton Primary School it was important that her child felt safe, secure and included when attending the school. It was important that all children had a voice within the school, and the way the information from the report was shared within the school and at home really opened this up for the children and families, who were able to share thoughts and feelings with the school. Looking forward and making plans for the

future of the school, children, learning and families would discuss the report at the PFA meeting, which was attended by many members of staff and ensured the PFA support. The school improvement plan had been touched upon at previous meetings, but would be revisited. Overall, the work and support from the school continued to be shown to parents and the communication on all aspects was super. Exciting learning was happening in the school all the time.

- 4.8 Mr Bewsey, Quality Improvement Officer congratulated the Headteacher, who had only been in post just over a year when the inspection took place, for her continued hard work and strong leadership and was confident that the school would continue to move forward at pace.

DECISION

AGREED: -

- (a) The School Improvement Plan for Ayton Primary School which addressed areas for improvement as outlined in the HMIE Inspection Report (December 2023).**

- (b) The Quality Improvement Team's plan for support and showcasing of the work of Ayton Primary School following a strong inspection.**

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am