



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2015  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)  
Provost L Broun-Lindsay  
Councillor S Brown  
Councillor J Caldwell  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor D Grant  
Councillor J Gillies  
Councillor W Innes  
Councillor M Libberton  
Councillor P MacKenzie  
Councillor F McAllister  
Councillor P McLennan  
Councillor J McNeil  
Councillor J Williamson  
Ms G Gillan  
Mrs M Goldsmith  
Mr M McHugh

**Council Officials Present:**

Mr D Nightingale, Head of Education  
Mrs M Ferguson, Service Manager – Legal & Procurement  
Mr R Parker, Education Service Manager (Strat & Ops)  
Ms L Neri, Lead Officer GIRFEC (Item 5)  
Ms J Ogden-Smith, Communications Officer  
Mr G Clark, Head Teacher at Preston Lodge High School (Item 2)  
Mr C Gerrie, Head Teacher at Musselburgh Grammar School (Item 2)

**Clerk:**

Ms F Currie, Committees Assistant

**Apologies:**

Councillor D Berry  
Councillor S Currie  
Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor M Veitch  
Mr S Bunyan

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

## **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JUNE 2015 FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 16 June 2015 were presented for approval.

Referring to Item 6 of the minutes, Councillor MacKenzie asked whether the Committee would receive the agreed updates on progress against key attainment goals. The Convenor confirmed that this would be provided under Item 2 of the meeting.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the minutes.

## **2. SUMMARY OF ATTAINMENT IN SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SQA) EXAMINATION RESULTS IN EAST LoTHIAN SCHOOLS FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 2015**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of overall pass rates levels in East Lothian in SQA Examinations 2014/15 and the level of attainment of secondary pupils in S5 and S6. The report also informed the Committee of subsequent reports on the attainment and achievement of all pupils in the senior phase (S4 to S6) in East Lothian, using information from Insight.

The Head of Education, Darrin Nightingale, presented the report providing a brief outline of the new reporting arrangements, an update on the transition to the new national exam structure and the background to the latest attainment figures.

Mr Nightingale responded to a number of questions from Members providing clarification on the level of exam presentations within different schools and the figures for overall pass rates. When asked to address variations in levels of attainment, he said that many factors could affect overall attainment and that these would vary from school to school and pupil to pupil. He explained that attainment meetings would be taking place with each school to discuss their results and identify what needed to be done to improve attainment levels for their pupils.

Mr Nightingale then introduced Colin Gerrie, Head Teacher at Musselburgh Grammar School, and Gavin Clark, Head Teacher at Preston Lodge High School, who provided summaries of progress within their schools.

Mr Gerrie began with a brief summary of his experiences at previous schools and went on to outline some of the initiatives which had been put in place since his arrival at Musselburgh Grammar School. He explained that pupils and parents were actively engaged in monitoring progress throughout the year and received reports at 5 key stages. He maintained that this greater level of accountability allowed staff to more quickly identify the challenges facing individual pupils and to put in place measures to improve performance.

Mr Clark outlined his experiences at Preston Lodge High School and how it had benefited from examples provided by schools in the west of Scotland. He agreed that improving attainment required monitoring and tracking, as well as raising the aspirations and expectations of pupils. He referred to examples of good practice from

around the country and to the benefits of national tools such as 'Insight'. He said that pupils at Preston Lodge had been encouraged to sit qualifications over 2 years and this had helped to increase the level of presentations and improve performance in the Higher exams.

Mr Gerrie and Mr Clark responded to questions from Members on various aspects of their presentations outlining aspects of parental involvement at each school, the transition process from primary to secondary and addressing concerns about the potential for increased pressure on senior pupils. Mr Nightingale also summarised changes to school inspection procedures.

Councillor McAllister observed that the Curriculum for Excellence encouraged staff and pupils to develop an innovative approach to learning and it was unfortunate that there remained a lack of understanding among the general public. He said more should be done to promote the benefits of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Councillor MacKenzie offered his congratulations to teaching staff across the county for the tremendous results documented in the report. However, referring to the recent Audit Scotland report on education, he emphasised the importance of the Council allocating sufficient resources to address continuing gaps in attainment levels. He also said that, in his view, the report did not fully address the reasons for difference in attainment levels between schools and the actions needed to address this.

Councillor McNeil pointed out that the Council spends around half of its budget on education with part of this given directly to individual schools to address issues at a local level. He also reflected on the changes at Musselburgh Grammar School in recent months which had resulted in such a marked improvement.

Councillor Innes welcomed the report noting the very positive results. He referred in particular to the significant improvements at Musselburgh Grammar School and Ross High School, offering his congratulations to the staff and pupils.

Councillor Libberton commented that, in addition to the evidence provided in the figures, Preston Lodge High School was clearly a very happy place with both staff and pupils fully engaged in the learning process.

The Convenor drew the discussion to a close and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr Gerrie and Mr Clark, and their colleagues throughout the county for their innovative leadership. She said that it was reassuring to see the level accountability and engagement from staff, pupils and parents and she reiterated the Council's commitment to raising attainment and improving opportunities and outcomes for all pupils.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) receive two further reports on attainment in the senior phase following publication of 2015 data through the Scottish Government national benchmarking tool, 'Insight':
  - in November focusing on the Local Benchmarking Measure and Breadth & Depth data to 2015 based on the attainment and achievement of all young people at the end of S4, S5 or S6; and

- in March focusing on the National Benchmarking Measure” and Breadth & Depth data to 2015 based on the attainment and achievement of all school leavers;
- (iii) note the examination results continue to inform and guide actions in each of the six secondary schools’ School Improvement Plans.

### **3. EDUCATION LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND STRATEGY 2014-2018**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update and inform the Committee on the development and implementation of the programme of work in relation to the Department’s Education Local Improvement Plan and Strategy 2014-2018.

Mr Nightingale presented the report explaining that this new plan and strategy had been prepared under the auspices of the Senior Management Education Board (SMEB) and had received the support of schools across the county. He said that the document provided an overview at local authority level while also offering a variety of options which schools could incorporate into their own improvement plans. Mr Nightingale advised that the plan and strategy were currently being updated to reflect changes to the Service and to detail which objectives had been completed.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr Nightingale confirmed that information could be made available on progress against targets for developmental outcomes in 27-30 month assessments; all schools were now providing 2 hours of quality PE to pupils each week; and that the professional update for teachers had been rolled out to all schools. He provided examples of the strategies which were in place to ensure continued improvement in the levels of literacy and numeracy and outlined aspects of the ‘Bring Your Own Device’ initiative to encourage the use of IT in the classroom.

Referring to the Scottish Government paper ‘Creating a Smarter Scotland’, Councillor MacKenzie commented that the Education Local Improvement Plan and Strategy should be particular, precise and have singular plans for each school and the departments within each school. He said that it should also address the attainment gap.

The Convenor welcomed the paper as an important document prepared in collaboration with school staff and in response to a request from schools for less prescriptive guidance.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) note the Department’s Education Local Improvement Plan and Strategy 2014-2018; and
- (ii) support the detailed activity, whilst acknowledging the document is currently being reviewed and updated.

### **4. SCHOOL SESSION DATES 2016/17 AND 2017/18**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee’s approval for School Session dates for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Richard Parker, Education Service Manager (Strat & Ops), presented the report advising Members that discussions had taken place with City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council in an attempt to align dates as far as possible across the three Local Authorities. This had been achieved for the majority of dates in 2016/17 and between East Lothian and Edinburgh for 2017/18. Midlothian Council had decided not to set session dates for 2017/18 at the present time.

Mr Parker said that consultation had taken place with Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, UNISON, Educational Establishments, Parent Councils and the wider community. Of the 31 responses, 24 were content that the session dates aligned with those of City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Approve the school session dates for 2016/17 and 2017/18;
- (ii) Authorise notification to Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils; and
- (iii) Authorise notification to the Scottish Government Education Department.

## **5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2014**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update the Committee on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Mr Nightingale presented the report providing an update on progress towards implementation of the Named Person Service for children aged 0 – 18 years by August 2016. He reminded Members that Local Authorities, and in particular Education Departments, would have responsibility for providing a Named Person for every child aged 5 – 18 within their area.

Lara Neri, Lead Officer GIRFEC, responded to a number of questions from Members on the ethos of the legislation, proposed supervision arrangements, the timing of statutory guidance due to be published by the Scottish Government and whether the current timetable for implementation could be achieved.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to consider the implications that the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will have on the Education Department and schools across East Lothian.

## **6. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Mr Nightingale presented the report advising Members that, following these appointments, there were no further Head Teacher vacancies in East Lothian.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

**7. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL PLACING APPEALS 2015**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the outcome of East Lothian Council's Placing Appeals in 2015.

Mr Nightingale presented the report indicating that of the 18 appeals heard by the Education Appeals Committee in 2015, 17 had resulted in the decision of the Education Authority being upheld and 1 had led to the Authority's decision being overturned.

Responding to a question from Councillor Williamson, Mr Nightingale advised that details of individual appeals could not be provided as this information was often of a confidential nature and, as such, subject to Data Protection rules.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the outcome of the Placing Appeals.

Signed .....

Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Convener of the Education Committee