



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

**TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2019
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor J Henderson
Councillor S Kempson
Councillor K Mackie
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor J Williamson
Ms G Gillan
Ms E Malcolm

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education
Dr L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education
Ms F Brown, Principal Officer (Education)
Ms L Brown, Chief Operating Officer (Education)

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart, Committees Officer

Apologies:

Councillor W Innes

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 20 NOVEMBER 2018 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting on 20 November 2018 were approved.

Matters Arising

Councillor Gilbert requested that a report on flexible schooling was added to a future agenda.

Item 3 – The Chair advised that there would be a Members' Briefing on 1140 Hours Expansion (to early learning and child care provision) on 26 March, 2.30-4pm.

Item 6 – The Chair advised that the consultation exercise on the future of Prestonpans Infants School and Primary School had been approved and the process to recruit a Head Teacher had now begun.

2. RESERVING PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT AREA DURING ACADEMIC YEAR 2019/20

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval for reserving places for incoming catchment pupils at East Lothian Schools, as detailed at paragraph 2.1 of the report.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer, presented the report outlining the factors considered when determining the appropriate number of reserved places for pupils moving into the catchment area of East Lothian schools during 2019/20. Ms Brown advised that the number of reserved places in the report reflected current understanding of the likely number of pupils who will be in each catchment area, or moving into it, during the next academic year. Should some of the reserved places at schools not be required or the situation change, the Committee was asked to delegate any increase or decrease in reserved places to the Head of Education, in consultation with the Convener.

Councillor Findlay noted that no places had been held in reserve at Aberlady Primary School and Ms Brown replied that there was currently significant capacity at each stage in this school and the Authority received few requests for places at Aberlady Primary School from families outwith the catchment area.

Councillor Forrest asked if, in view of extensive house building in Musselburgh, an adequate number of places had been reserved at the three primary schools in his Ward. Ms Brown explained how the reserved places had been calculated and stated that she was confident adequate places had been reserved. She also explained that more places had been reserved for incoming S1 pupils at North Berwick High School than Musselburgh Grammar due to increasing demand in that area.

The Chair stated that, due to the pace of growth in the county, reserving sufficient places for pupils who move into the area was important to ensure that families can secure places for their children at both primary and secondary schools.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. to hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for session 2019/20 for primary and secondary schools, as outlined in the report; and
- ii. to delegate any increase or decrease in reserved places to the Head of Education, in consultation with the Convener.

3. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSION 2019/20

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval for the S1-S4 intake levels for secondary schools for Session 2019/20.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer, presented the report outlining the issues for consideration when reviewing and capping school rolls. She referred Members to the detail of the proposals set out in the report and advised changes from 2018. The Committee was asked to delegate any changes to the maximum intake level in S1-S4 to the Head of Education in consultation with the Education Convener, should the number of pupils requiring a place at school significantly increase or decrease.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Brown advised why certain capping levels had changed and explained how the numbers were calculated.

Councillor Findlay asked if Members could be informed if any school rolls were breached and Ms Brown confirmed that Members would be notified. She also advised that school roll numbers were closely monitored and based on accurate projections.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. to maximum intake levels in S1-S4 for session 2019/20 as outlined in the report; and
- ii. to delegate any changes to the maximum intake level in S1-S4 to the Head of Education in consultation with the Education Convener.

4. SCHOOL SESSION DATES (2020-2021 AND 2021-2022)

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval for school session dates for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Richard Parker, Education Service Manager, presented the report, advising the key considerations when drafting the session dates. He stated that the draft dates for 2019/2020 aligned with Edinburgh, and was expected to align closely with Midlothian, in relation to the main holiday periods. Midlothian Council had yet to go out to consultation on their dates. The draft East Lothian dates had been circulated to Head Teachers, Teachers' Professional Associations, UNISON, Educational staff and Parent Councils and comments had been taken into consideration when finalising the draft session dates.

Councillor Williamson stated that aligning holiday dates with neighbouring authorities as closely as possible was very helpful to parents. The Chair agreed, stating that it simplified arrangements for parents and carers.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. approve the school session dates for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 as outlined in the report;
- ii. authorise the Head of Education to notify Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils; and to
- iii. authorise the Head of Education to notify the Scottish Government.

5. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION: FOLLOW THROUGH EVALUATION BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) on the Educational Psychology Service Validated Self Valuation follow-through evaluation by Education Scotland.

Dr Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, presented the report. She stated that an initial visit in March 2016 had found a number of key strengths and identified areas for improvement. A follow-through visit had taken place in January 2018 to review progress and Dr Binnie detailed the actions taken to address the next steps. She also reported that Education Scotland were satisfied with progress made from the initial visit and were confident in the capacity of the Service to make continuous improvement under the leadership of the Principle Educational Psychologist and the Head of Education.

Dr Binnie stated that a key strength of the team was being pro-active rather than re-active, and meeting the mental health needs of the child before needs became more distressing and more challenging.

Councillor Goodfellow stated that the Scottish Government were committed to putting mental health workers in schools and asked if funding for this was yet available. Dr Binnie advised that COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) would determine how this funding would be allocated.

Councillor Dugdale enquired how the action points were likely to have an impact on staff and Dr Binnie replied that staff training would be carried out to develop a more collective understanding and awareness of what can be achieved. She also advised that schools wanted more staff to be trained to support young people.

Councillor Mackie asked how many educational psychologists were employed in East Lothian and Dr Binnie replied that there were presently the equivalent of 8.2 as a number of staff were on part time contracts. In response to a question from Councillor Henderson, Dr Binnie advised that the need for mental health care arose from a range of factors. East Lothian had moved away from the medicalisation of mental health issues; the main purpose was to support schools and families.

The Chair noted that there had been a reduction in the number of exclusions from school and enquired about the impact of that on the school communities. Dr Binnie replied that there had also been an increase in attendance, and a development plan focussing on nurturing and restorative work would soon be rolled out to schools. Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, added that there was also a corporate parent group to identify and address challenges. A multi-agency approach and earlier intervention were also important.

Councillor Mackie asked if the mental health first aid courses for teachers were voluntary and Dr Binnie replied that they were and that the response to training had been positive. Gael Gillan added that there had been a full uptake of the course by 15 of her members and they had found the course helpful.

In response to a question from the Chair on the Early Years, Dr Binnie replied that a two year development post focussing on the Early Years had been created.

The Chair congratulated Dr Binnie and her team on the excellent work they were doing in the county's schools and nurseries, stating that it was right to focus on the health and wellbeing of young people.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. note the key strengths and next steps as outlined by Education Scotland following their follow-through evaluation visit to the Educational Psychology Service; and to
- ii. note the action taken by Educational Psychology Service to address the next step identified by Education Scotland.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee