



**East Lothian**  
Council

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

**TUESDAY 8 JUNE 2021  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

---

**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor F Dugdale (Convener)  
Councillor S Akhtar  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Miss G Gillan, EIS  
Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor J Henderson  
Councillor C Hoy  
Councillor W Innes  
Councillor S Kempson  
Councillor P McLennan  
Rev G Sheridan  
Councillor J Williamson

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms L Brown, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services  
Dr L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms L Byrne, Group Service Manager  
Ms K Conway, Solicitor  
Mr N Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager  
Ms K Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer  
Mr D Henderson, Finance Manager, Service Accounting  
Ms P Homer, Lead Officer, Early Years and Childcare  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations)  
Ms P Smith, Principal Officer (Information and Research)  
Ms L Stewart, Quality Improvement Officer  
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services  
Ms J Allen, Communications Adviser  
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer

**Head Teachers Present:**

Ms A Cameron  
Ms S Cook  
Mr W French  
Mr P Reynolds  
Ms L Rodger

**Others Present:**

Councillor N Hampshire

Councillor J McMillan

Ms N McDowell, Head of Education (with effect from 14.6.21)

**Clerk:**

Ms J Totney, Team Manager – Democratic and Licensing

**Apologies:**

Ms E Malcolm

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

Prior to the commencement of business, the Clerk advised that the meeting was being held remotely, in accordance with the Scottish Government's guidance on physical distancing; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. She stated that the Council is the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for up to six months from the date of the meeting.

The Clerk recorded attendance of Committee Members by roll call.

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 16 MARCH 2021 FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 16 March 2021 were approved.

**2. UPDATE ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS AND THE WIDER EDUCATION SERVICE DURING SESSION 202/21**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the impact of COVID-19 on schools and the wider Education Service, along with an update on the lessons learned.

Lesley Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services, explained that the report draws on an update that was provided to full Council in April 2021. She reported on the challenges that learners, schools and families had experienced, summarised the arrangements for the SQA Alternative Certification Model, reminded Members that since April 2020 there has been essential oversight of the safe operation of schools, and wished to record her thanks to school staff, parents, carers and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted that learners have been impacted in a range of ways and reported that ongoing assessment has resulted in interventions, including essential partnership working, to support learners to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

In response to a question from Councillor Williamson Ms Brown updated Members in relation to the campaign to recruit additional teachers, commenting that there has been

an ongoing campaign in line with Scottish Government funding and that for the academic year ahead, Head Teachers were being invited to submit a business case for staff.

Answering questions from Councillor Findlay about the range of assessments and recruitment campaign for early years and nursery provision, and the transfer of information to support the transition from early years to primary school, Ms Brown explained that there is ongoing assessment of children in this sector by highly skilled staff and that early years staff and practitioners are being recruited, particularly to support 1140 Hours. She added that transition arrangements have been different this year with no primary one school visits but stressed that there is ongoing dialogue about the needs of children who are starting in primary one, especially as many transfer from private nursery providers.

Councillor Akhtar asked a number of questions: what was in place to ensure that the nurture and recovery agenda was consistent across all schools, what support was in place to support teaching staff in relation to their health and wellbeing, and what would the Education Service be doing to engage with young people following the move away from COVID-19 recovery activities. Ms Brown stressed that nurture is the cornerstone of how schools operate and that this has been a focus in all schools through the work of Dr Binnie's Service (Education Psychological Services), supported by the work of the Quality Improvement team. She added that all schools had been asked to prioritise recovery as a key area in every School Improvement Plan, given that there is a direct link between the nurture and recovery agenda. She explained that there has been engagement with school staff at all levels regarding health and wellbeing which had been very well received and commented that there are very good relationships with professional associations. Regarding engagement with young people, Ms Brown advised that there have been virtual meetings with secondary pupils and that Nicola McDowell, who takes up the post of Head of Education on 14 June, will consider ways of engaging with primary school children.

Councillor Gilbert sought an update regarding the distribution of digital devices. Ms Brown advised that there had been some supply issues but that the allocations have been carefully monitored to ensure that no schools or individual learners were disadvantaged.

Ms Gillan, EIS, commented very highly on the report and praised the very effective working relationship with East Lothian Council.

Councillor Akhtar stated that the report was very significant and highlighted an unprecedented year for the whole school community and East Lothian Council. She made particular reference to the speed of implementing remote learning, the work of the Education Recovery Group, the commitment and support from school staff, parents, carers, young people and officers in the Education Service, and the safe return to schools. She commended the Education Service for the recognition of good practice received from the Scottish Government and the leadership from Ms Brown and Councillor Dugdale, Cabinet Spokesperson for Education and Children's Services and Convener of the Education Committee. She expressed her thanks to everyone who has supported the Education Service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Goodfellow supported the comments made by Councillor Akhtar, and stated that the speed and quality of digital learning activities had been really impressive. He added his thanks to all involved.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, remarked on the enormous efforts from everyone regarding the response to the pandemic; highlighted that there had been a very positive review from Education Scotland; acknowledged the role of Parent Councils; thanked Councillor Akhtar for her all her hard work as previous Education committee Convener; and praised Ms Brown and her team for maintaining a clear focus and vision. She added her heartfelt thanks to all parties who have supported the Education Service during the pandemic.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the update on the impact of COVID-19 on schools and the wider Education Service during session 2020/21.
- ii. the update on lessons learned including areas which the service and schools plan to build on and areas where further support will be required as a result of any negative impacts of COVID and school closures.

### **3. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – MENTAL HEALTH, FAMILY SUPPORT AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the progress of mental health, family support and service developments to improve outcomes for children and young people across East Lothian.

Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services, presented the report and highlighted the salient points in relation to improving outcomes for children and the commitment to improving lives through new and integrated services that can meet the increasing mental health impacts being experienced by pupils and parents/carers. She added that service developments are in line with The Promise/Who Cares Scotland and that recent developments included introducing the post of Virtual School Head Teacher. Ms Tait concluded by informing Members that continued funding from the Scottish Government is not guaranteed and that future progress and service development would be kept under review.

Councillor Akhtar commented on the value of the report and asked if there is to be a Parenting and Family Support Strategy at a national level. Ms Tait advised that there is a clear vision for East Lothian, supported by a draft Parenting and Family Support Strategy which ensures that all communities have access to support and targeted interventions. Regarding the national approach, Ms Tait commented that she is a member of the National Family Support Network; the Children's Strategic Partnership is meeting later this week; a new family support co-ordinator has been appointed; and that East Lothian Council is therefore well placed to take on national guidance.

Responding to questions from Ms Gillan and Councillor Goodfellow, Dr Binnie, Service Manager, Inclusion and Wellbeing, explained the ways that counselling services could be accessed and the range of ways in which the service could be provided, which included weekly drop-in sessions and GP referrals. She advised that there are six mental health youth workers across the county, and reported that loss and bereavement group-work sessions will be delivered in August. Regarding the sustainability of the service, Dr Binnie advised that there is core funding for the mental health youth workers in the budget.

**Sederunt:** *Councillor Hoy joined the meeting.*

Replying to Councillor McMillan, Ms Tait advised that there are multi agency support groups, including third sector and health partners, providing a combined support approach to children and families.

Councillor Akhtar welcomed the paper and the work that is being carried out to support people to live, learn and stay in East Lothian, and commended the post of Virtual Head Teacher.

Councillor Forrest valued the work that is being undertaken to provide help to families and drew attention to the fact that money advice for families is another strand that can be factored into the support that is available.

Councillor Goodfellow thanked Ms Tait for the excellent paper and welcomed the fact that there is sustainable funding to deliver elements of the service.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, added her thanks to Ms Tait and Dr Binnie for the extensive work that is underway to support children and families and hoped that the impact of the work would be recognised by the Scottish Government who would continue to invest in the service. She wished to record her thanks to Ms S Laing, Virtual Head Teacher, and on behalf of the committee wished her well in imminent retirement.

## **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the progress being made in supporting children and young people's mental health.
- ii. the work underway to strengthen the family support offer.
- iii. the aspects of service development and improvement as outlined in this report.

## **4. UPDATE ON EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE TO 1140 HOURS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services updating the committee on the implementation of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare in East Lothian.

Ms P Homer, Lead Officer – Early Years and Childcare, presented the report and highlighted the challenges that has resulted in a delay of one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic which included the safe reopening of both local authority and private settings; the phasing and delivery models that would be available from August 2021; the Council's new 1140 Hours website; the Council's response to maintaining the National Standard as set out by Scottish Government; funding for providers; career development opportunities; and that despite the challenges and delays, 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare will be available in full to all families in East Lothian in the new academic year.

Councillor Findlay posed questions regarding readiness for the next academic year and feedback from parents. Ms Homer advised that there had been some slippage in works to the physical estate due to COVID-19 and that contingencies were in place

which means that no family would be disadvantaged as a result. She shared some of the comments from parents, explained that most families requirements are different, advised that formal feedback would be sought once the 1140 Hours had been up and running fully for some time, and acknowledged Councillor Findlay's request to consider a formal consultation with parents ahead of the next academic year.

Responding to Councillor Williamson, Ms Homer advised that nursery facilities are not subject to catchment areas and that parents can apply to any nursery.

Councillor Dugdale thanked all officers involved in delivering 1140 Hours. She also took the opportunity to record that a number of Head Teachers were present at today's meeting and indicated that Head Teachers would be invited to support all meetings of the Education Committee in future.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the way in which COVID-19 restrictions in Scottish Government and Public Health Guidance continue to impact on the provision of 1140 hours.
- ii. the progress made in making 1140 hours available to families in East Lothian through all providers including Local Authority nurseries and partnership working with funded providers.
- iii. the numbers of children currently accessing 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare and the models and hours to be made available through local authority nurseries for the academic year 2021 – 2022.
- iv. the work undertaken to ensure quality as a key principle of the expansion.
- v. continued success of the 1140 hours programme and the job opportunities this has created.

## **5. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ALL – RAISING ATTAINMENT STRATEGY**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the work underway across Education and Children's Services to improve outcomes for all, through raising attainment and achievement and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report also sets out the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and seeks approval of the range of actions underway as part of the Raising Attainment Strategy.

Mr N Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer, presented the report and stressed that there is a continued strong focus on raising attainment to ensure that every child achieves the highest standard in numeracy and literacy. He referred to key items in the report including action plans, funding, and the Audit Scotland report: "Improving Outcomes for Young People". He reminded Members that there are temporary gaps in data due to the COVID-19 pandemic when no data was collected in June 2020, and stated that the data for 2019/20 could not be used for comparative year-on-year analysis. Mr Trussler concluded by highlighting some of the key data and trends in relation to items such as positive destinations and school leaver awards.

Councillor McMillan asked about positive destinations and feedback from employers to which Mr Craik-Collins, Education Services Manager, reported on the Kick-Start

initiative and other ongoing activities with East Lothian Works, Foundation Apprenticeships, and relationships with businesses.

Councillor Akhtar enquired about consistency of recording across all schools; Councillor Goodfellow raised a question about Pupil Equity Funding, and Councillor Hampshire asked about support from the Council for families living in poverty in relation to attainment. In response, Mr Trussler spoke about the raising attainment priority which features in every school Improvement Plan, and confirmed that the Pupil Equity Funding had been continued for 2021/22. He further indicated that schools are using school-based data to identify equity gaps, schools are receiving support from Quality Improvement Officers and the Scottish Government's Attainment Adviser, that school improvement plans are evaluated throughout the session to ensure that the identified outcomes are being met, and schools are best placed to identify and address poverty related attainment gaps in conjunction with families and partner agencies.

Ms Brown advised that the Scottish Government are currently reviewing the Attainment Challenge and that she is one of three Directors of Education from across Scotland who sit on that Advisory Board.

Ms Gillan commented that attainment is at the centre of the education system, welcomed the new work streams referred to in the report and looked forward to working with East Lothian Council to focus on attainment priorities.

Councillor Akhtar stated that the provision of education is one of the most important responsibilities of the local authority, and was heartened to learn that Ms Brown was a member of the Advisory Board. She added that Members would also monitor developments via CoSLA.

Councillor Forrest welcomed the report and thanked Parent Councils, Head Teachers and staff in his local Ward.

Councillor Goodfellow welcomed the fact that the Scottish Government is to review the Attainment Fund and was hopeful that via input from Ms Brown the discriminatory nature of the fund would be removed.

***Sederunt:*** Councillors Kempson and McLennan left the meeting.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, welcomed the clear commitment to achieving equity and closing the attainment gaps. She commented positively on elements of the data and stressed the need to strive to improve outcomes for all children and young people. In closing, she took the opportunity to extend good wishes to Head Teachers Colin Gerrie and Lauren Rodger who would be leaving the Education Service at the end of the current school year.

## **Decision**

Following a roll call vote the Education Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i. note the contents of this report and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on East Lothian learners.
- ii. note the key successes, areas of progress and action being taken by schools and the Education Service to improve pupil attainment during the current school session 2020-21 and planned for session 2021-22.

- iii. note the key successes, areas of progress and action being taken by East Lothian Works to ensure continued positive destinations and employability options for school leavers.
- iv. approve the actions and key areas of focus as outlined at 3.9.1 – 3.9.5 as part of the development of a Raising Attainment Strategy focused on improving outcomes for all.

## **6 SOUTH EAST IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE - UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the work of the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC) including the new SEIC Regional Improvement Plan - April 2021.

Ms Brown provided an annual update on the work of the SEIC and outlined the salient points from the report, highlighting the next steps, partnership working, new strategic goals, and welcomed that Ms L Stewart, Quality Improvement Officer at East Lothian Council, was currently working to the SEIC.

Councillor Akhtar commented that it is positive to see the positive benefits of SEIC and acknowledged the time that officers have committed to this. Ms Brown stated that the SEIC priorities are very much aligned with East Lothian Council and that the Collaborative provides a level of additionality that the Council previously did not have.

In response to Councillor Goodfellow, Ms Stewart advised that the lead teachers are subject based, not faculty based and that there is real collaboration between these teachers and the Quality Improvement Officers.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, stated that East Lothian Council had made a significant contribution to the SEIC, despite being a small local authority. Ms Brown confirmed that East Lothian officers were a strong part of the Collaborative and were involved in a range of groups, adding that participation was very beneficial and offered the opportunity to influence future developments, share best practice, and learn from others.

Councillor Goodfellow praised the real progress made by the SEIC and the confidence that teachers have in the Collaboration.

Councillor Akhtar welcomed the alignment with the East Lothian Education Improvement Plan and expressed her appreciation that such collaborations take place.

Councillor Dugdale closed the item by commenting that it was helpful for the committee to see the developments from the SEIC and the benefits to East Lothian Council.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the SEIC Regional Improvement Plan dated April 2021, at appendix 1 to the report.
- ii. the priority areas for improvement being taken forward in partnership with members of the SEIC and the progress made towards improving professional collaboration and school empowerment across the SEIC.



## **7 LEARNING ESTATE REVIEW - UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services providing an update on the progress with the Learning Estate Review pre-consultation and the plans for the next stage of the community consultation.

Mr Craik-Collins updated the committee on the plans for a community consultation and full public pre-consultation exercise, together with the statutory requirement to develop a strategic Learning Estate Investment Plan. He summarised the timelines and phasing as detailed in the report and provided details of the next steps in terms of community engagement.

As requested by Councillor Akhtar, Mr Craik-Collins elaborated on the engagement with young people and stressed the importance of engaging with young pupils, although the logistics of doing so are difficult due to the pandemic.

In response to Councillor Dugdale, Mr Craik-Collins advised that there had been a good level of engagement with the online consultation. Councillor Dugdale thanked officers for this important piece of work and took the opportunity to wish Mr M Bedwell, Learning Estates Officer, well on his move to a new post outwith East Lothian Council.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the completion of phase 1 of the Learning Estate Review pre-consultation
- ii. the impact of the pandemic on the timeline and plans for community-based engagement workshops.

## **8. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services informing the Committee of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Ms Brown signposted Members to the Head Teacher appointments as detailed in the report.

Councillor Goodfellow commented that the high number of good quality candidates reflected well on the Education Service in East Lothian.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, extended a warm welcome to the new Head Teachers and thanked the members of the Parent Councils who took part in the recruitment process.

Signed .....

Councillor Fiona Dugdale  
Convener of the Education Committee