



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

**TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2022
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor F Dugdale – Convener
Councillor L Allan
Councillor L Bruce
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor N Hampshire
Councillor C McFarlane
Councillor L Menzies
Councillor B Ritchie
Councillor T Trotter
Councillor C Yorkston – Depute Convener
Ms G Gillan (EIS)
Mr R Lesso (External Rep)
Rev G Sheridan (External Rep)

Council Officials Present:

Ms L Brown, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Dr L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist
Mr N Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager
Ms K Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations)
Ms B Skirrow, Principal Officer (Education Service)
Ms J Allen, Communications Adviser
Ms C McGarr – Education Support Officer
Ms K Thomson – Quality Improvement Officer
Ms J Boyle – Quality Improvement Officer (Equity)
Ms A Cameron – Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years)
Ms A Hood – Team Manager (Education & Employability)
Ms J Tait – Head of Children's Services
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer

Head Teachers Present:

Ms S Skinner – Head Teacher at Longniddry Primary School
Ms J Legge – Head Teacher at Stenton and Innerwick Primary Schools

Clerk:

Ms M Scott, Committee Officer

Other Elected Members present:

Councillor D Collins

Apologies:

Councillor J Findlay

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.

Councillor Dugdale extended a welcome to the Head Teachers who were present at the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 21 JUNE 2022 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 21 June 2022 were approved.

2. EDUCATION SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT & IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2022-23

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services seeking the Committee's approval of the Education Service Progress Report and Improvement Plan on key improvement priorities achieved for session 2021/22 and identification of key improvement priorities planned for session 2022/23.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education, explained the report provided updates on progress from the last session as part of a range of ongoing methods of self-evaluation. She added that officers had reviewed school standards and quality reports and improvement plans in order to ascertain where further improvements were required. Ms McDowell presented the report, outlining the specific areas of progress and improvement within the Education Service which included the amalgamation of the Pupil Equity Fund into schools' own individual improvement plans, the benefit of Strategic Equity Funding over 4 years to support COVID-19 recovery and accelerate closing the poverty related attainment gap, the launch of a new attendance policy in July 2022 with a positive approach to improving attendance, progress with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Single Point of Access and the ways East Lothian Works had continued to support employability for both young people and adults. Ms McDowell reported that the Education Service had sharpened their baseline measures to ensure progress and accountability and set the three new recovery-based priorities of Curriculum, Inclusion, and Wellbeing and Leadership. She concluded by saying whilst there continued to be ongoing challenges the school service remained ambitious for their children and young people and for progress and achievement.

Councillor Yorkston asked a question in relation to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Single Point of Access. Dr Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, explained

that the figures reported in the paper were for the academic year 2021/22 and a new data collection would begin in August. She stated that figures for the last three months indicated that the numbers had remained stable, with an average of 75-80 referrals per month so the service had not seen a significant increase at this point and the need for the service had been maintained. Dr Binnie noted that the service had the same capacity as the previous academic session but they were looking to grow at all points, noting that they and the Mental Health Youth Workers had now been trained in Low Mood Interventions as well as the LIAM Intervention. The service had continued to work closely with CAMHS and other partners and had recently re-established the Mental Health Strategy Group to consider funding as they moved forward to ensure children and young people are getting the right service at the right time. Dr Binnie added that the groups felt confident with introducing new interventions as well as engaging the capacity for existing interventions to remain. She reported that a contract had recently been established with Place2Be to offer art therapy to primary school-aged children and had renewed a contract with MyPass for art therapy for secondary-aged children along with counselling.

In response to the second question from Councillor Yorkston, Mr Neil Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager, reported that East Lothian Works had moved to a space of strength within education as an intervention and support service and noted it was their mission to understand how many people they were helping and how they knew that the help actually worked. Mr Craik-Collins said a notable strength throughout the pandemic was the virtual work experience and 100% completion of foundation apprenticeships. He advised that 250 pupils were being supported in schools alone without even looking at further college placements where a further 55 courses were on offer, and that they were looking to increase their senior portfolio to include IT software foundation apprenticeships next session. Mr Craik-Collins informed members that they were already exploring options at the new Wallyford campus for engineering, science and design engineering construction, which would have direct pathways into architecture and infrastructure design. He added that Morrison Regional Skills Academy were already live on site at Wallyford and they were working with The Ridge on construction renewables to build integrated support systems for all schools in the region. Mr Craik-Collins informed members that the BESA Skills Academy would be going online in April 2023 to open a range of courses including refrigeration, air conditioning, renewables and on- and off-shore wind. He explained that they were trying to make a system that recognised talent and looked for strengths in young people to develop.

Councillor McFarlane asked what early intervention methods were being used in nurseries to help close the attainment gap. Alison Cameron, Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years), explained she would firstly consider the question at a universal level as there is a commitment to ensuring opportunities to develop staff across all Early Years settings in East Lothian due to the importance of enhancing skill sets. Ms Cameron reported that they had recently introduced the beginning of the East Lothian Early Learning and Childcare Academy where staff are trained in the East Lothian Way, being very clear on their expectations and building a high quality curriculum and environment for all children. She added that there is a key worker system in operation across all Early Learning and Childcare centres, and families should now be physically welcomed into settings to build up relationships with these workers. Ms Cameron reported that the Early Years Project Team had membership across Education, Children's Services, Health, funded partners and the third sector to create and develop systems across Early Years to improve outcomes for families such as Eligible 2s placements and Speech and Language Therapy. She added that Speech and Language was highlighted at the recent Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative last weekend in Glasgow and that communication in its most basic form, along with expressive and receptive language, were among the areas of concern

regarding younger children. Ms Cameron highlighted there are three Excellence and Equity Officers in East Lothian Council to support the targeted work of specific settings and noted that at a setting level interventions such as Blether with your Bairns, The Big Bed Time Read and Talking Time have supported identifying needs bespoke to settings. She added that support could be provided by Support from the Start, the Area Partnership and Council services such as outdoor learning.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh as regards the attainment gap, Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Officer (Equity), explained that they had looked at all attainment data post-COVID-19, at national data across Scotland and at virtual comparator data to formulate the stretch aim of 10% increase in SCQF 5 and 6. She noted that she was aware that the goal of supporting young people was ambitious and that schools would need to be supported in that endeavour. Ms Boyle explained that they wished to appoint a Principal Teacher of Equity in each Secondary school with the remit to look at young people of target, particularly children in quintile 1 who were at risk of not achieving the set stretch aims and working with them to identify strategies to support them to help close the attainment gap. She added that they hoped to augment that offer with partners to develop locality groups to offer holistic wraparound care and intervention for the most vulnerable young people.

In response to a second question from Councillor McIntosh, Mr Craik-Collins reported that they were actively engaging with on- and off-shore wind and the retrofit gas agenda. He added that, as previously mentioned, they were looking at engineering, science and the pathway for pupils who are quite able in maths, science and engineering, but also looking at other levels through the BESA Skills Academy which will open in 2023 at the Wallyford STEM Centre, which will fit into the pipeline mentioned by Councillor McIntosh. Mr Craik-Collins explained that there was a review of curriculum rationale in each school to see how engineering pathways could be looked at with a view to developing the foundation apprenticeship in engineering two years from now. He noted that this was challenging due to needing to have tier 1 contractors for industry placements but there will be early engagement with the business partners who win contracts in East Lothian to build pathways into these industries, including looking at the skills and qualifications that enable pupils to learn while they are still at school and then transition into expected employment destinations. Mr Craik-Collins said they were following up on the Jacobs contract for the Flood Protection Scheme in Musselburgh and that the Community Benefits Officer for East Lothian would be following up on opportunities on this and other opportunities which will come with contractors coming into East Lothian.

Councillor Bruce asked what discussions had taken place about trying to get young people into certain areas of employment within Health and Social Care. Mr Craik-Collins informed members they were actively engaged with the Adult Social Care Partnership and Edinburgh College dual qualifications but this had been exceptionally challenging in terms of trying to make a pathway work, but they would continue to look at this to see if there is a way to look at childcare and adult provision. He added that they were working with the Health and Social Care Partnership and Adult Services to see if pathways could be developed as there is a regional skills shortage, so the department were working with them to see if there can be new routes from modern apprenticeships through the work they are doing. Alison Hood, Team Manager (Education & Employability) provided extra information regarding the work done around paid work experience and the offer made to care at home providers. Ms Hood explained that they work very closely with Carol Jenner and her team in East Lothian Council to try and support that agenda and although it is a huge challenge it is something they would continue to work on. Councillor Bruce said he would follow up with Mr Craik-Collins and Ms Hood outside the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Ritchie, Sheona Skinner, Head Teacher at Longniddry Primary School, reported that her school had been awarded their second gold award and the children were vocal and keen on Rights Respecting. Ms Skinner added that they had learned that Rights Respect in schools needed to be embedded in everything they do and cannot just be an add-on, and this is what they tried to evidence when they had their assessment visit and when they have shared their practice across other schools in East Lothian. Ms Skinner explained that it needs to be understood by all children, staff, parents, carers and wider community partners for it to work properly. She said the children within her school were passionate about talking about their rights and they understand they have a pupil voice and that as rights holders they are entitled to certain things within the school and feel passionate about making a difference in the local and wider community. Ms Skinner announced that they had successful campaigns linked to the environment and had really powerful moments in the school where care experienced young people were able to use their knowledge of children's rights when something had not been working well for them so she thinks that Rights Respecting would be a hugely positive experience for any school. She said this linked into their teaching, learning and the school improvement plan where they also have a child friendly version to allow the children to be involved in evaluating the work the school does on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Menzies asked what measures were being taken to encourage young woman and girls into STEM subjects. Mr Craik-Collins said that it was a priority area to bring young women into STEM subjects. He explained that STEM pathways are promoted through roadshows to everyone with a real focus on trying to get girls to engage. Mr Craik-Collins added that through Morrison Construction a project called Woman in Construction provides project-based learning in that area and he is looking at ways to bring the chair of that committee to East Lothian as part of the community benefits.

Councillor Hampshire asked if a briefing could be delivered to Members to explain how the service will manage financially. Ms McDowell declared that in education they want to continue to support educational improvement at a time of diminishing resources but is aware of the challenges the Council is facing as a whole. Ms McDowell agreed to commit to delivering a briefing to Members on how the department intend to deliver on the increasing number of commitments they have.

Councillor Trotter asked if it were possible for figures to be reported by individual schools. Ms McDowell explained that the most recent data was not yet publicly available and she intended to bring a further update on the Raising Attainment Strategy to committee in March, at which time the information will be publicly available and will have been analysed.

In response to a question from Councillor Dugdale, Ms McDowell stated that Members would notice a streamlined number of priorities in the plan this year adding that the latest national improvement drivers take into account the challenges faced by the whole education system at this time. Ms McDowell noted there were also health and social challenges and she felt that the education priorities needed to take these into account, and that children and young people would not be ready to learn if they were not ready in their own lives. She stated that the education plan takes into account the joint working across services, especially priority 2, and she hoped that Members would see the streamlined number of priorities reflect the commitment to getting back on track so that next session's improvement plan could focus on a wider range of priorities.

Councillor Dugdale asked what other actions or interventions were happening with the Council's partners that should be highlighted. Ms Boyle felt it would be helpful to discuss the priorities set for primary schools and noted that they were looking to

appoint four Family Support Workers to work in the primary schools which had been identified as having children living in the highest levels of deprivation. The key focus for those Family Support Workers would be to provide holistic wraparound support and care to some of the most disadvantaged children with their in-school targets and also more widely within the children's lives to support bridging the gap between education and what is happening at home. Ms Boyle added that they were looking to augment locality groups and to have a forum within schools to discuss some of the children and young people they were most concerned about in terms of meeting their potential.

Councillor Hampshire thanked officers for producing their report and noted that Education was seen as the most important service and it was prioritised during decisions on the budget. He added that East Lothian had major challenges across the authority and this report would make sure that children in East Lothian from all backgrounds would get the best opportunities. Councillor Hampshire added that Members would do their best to protect the budget for education to ensure that the required improvements were delivered and that all children get the best opportunities possible.

Councillor McIntosh observed that there was a section in the report regarding training head and deputy head teachers had received on corporate parenting and the strong messaging not to use the term "looked after child" or "LAAC" and instead to focus on using "care experienced", but on the following pages this LAAC acronym was used multiple times.

Councillor Menzies thanked officers for their report and gave particular thanks to Ms McDowell and her team for dealing with an issue that had been raised regarding a school in her ward. Councillor Menzies added that she had recently visited this school and was overwhelmed by the quick turnaround, and praise the whole team for this. She commended the implementation of the foundation apprenticeships and workforce for the future.

Councillor Dugdale thanked officers for the report and said Ms McDowell had outlined the developing improvement with a clear focus, vision and action plan to achieve this. Councillor Dugdale said she was reassured by the success of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Single Point of Access and the work on curriculum and apprenticeships and how that has been introduced, supported and would hopefully be strengthened and expanded in future years. She noted that it was important to think of the improvement plan with three recovery-focussed priorities and the clear action plan, and found it helpful to see aspects of leadership of learning to include the voices of children and young people. Councillor Dugdale stated that efforts to work on the poverty-related attainment gap was well documented within the report and all should be mindful that schools and education cannot be held wholly accountable for closing this gap. She highlighted the importance of partnership working to make this work for children and young people and would call for all levels of government to keep the focus on tackling the causes of poverty.

The Convener moved to the vote on recommendations, taken by roll call, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The committee agreed:

- i) To note the overall positive progress made by the Education Service in delivery of the Council Plan and the priorities within the National Improvement Plan;

- ii) To note the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress of the 2021/22 priorities and the steps being taken to secure continuous improvement in session 2022/23;
- iii) To note that this Progress Report and Improvement Plan has been submitted to the Scottish Government in draft, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty pending Committee approval; and
- iv) To approve the Progress Report and Improvement Plan.

3. INCLUSION POLICY AND ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2020-23: PROGRESS UPDATE AND CONTINUATION FOR 2023-26

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the progress with actions agreed within the Accessibility Strategy 2020-2023, seeking approval from the Committee to extend the 2020-2023 action plan to cover the 2023-2026 period, and seeking approval from the Committee for minor updates to the Inclusion Policy.

Claire McGarr, Education Support Officer, spoke to the report highlighting the progress made within the Accessibility Strategy, especially within developing inclusive practice access across all East Lothian schools. Ms McGarr noted the areas which were not yet in operation, including Accessibility Standards for the School Estate and Working with Teachers of the Deaf. She explained that with launching the Accessibility Strategy in 2020 links had been established with LGBT Youth Scotland who had reviewed all policies and given feedback.

Councillor Hampshire asked if problems around remote learning had been taken into consideration as part of the policy. Ms McGarr explained that action 3.4 was geared towards assistive technology including augmentative and alternative communication and the accessibility aspect of that. She added that they were working closely with the Digital Learning Team and various networks across the board and this is a very common theme across Scotland. Ms McGarr stated that the fact they hadn't been able to work on this to the required level was one of the reasons they were requesting for an extension.

Councillor Ritchie expressed her thanks for the inclusion of language of intersectionality as she felt this was an important step towards goals of inclusion, equality and accessibility.

Councillor McIntosh thanked officers for an interesting and important report and found the two additions from young people both valuable and insightful, adding this showed how valuable it was to give young people a voice.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the Accessibility Strategy report and added when building new schools in East Lothian they should be designed in a way that deals with everyone's ability so they can access education in the area. He noted there is more difficulty in older buildings to do alterations but they need to look at every way possible to make these as accessible as possible. Councillor Hampshire expressed his hope to make technology inclusive so everyone can access it whether it is in school or at home and he looked forward to progress being made on this.

Councillor Dugdale thanked officers for bringing Members' attention to the work that had progressed in this area and the developing improvements in physical environments, communities and the curriculum. She added that it was understandable that extra time would be required due to the disruption experienced by COVID-19 and was pleased at the collaboration with LGBT Scotland and the voices of young people

being reflected within the report. Councillor Dugdale welcomed the report and looked forward to updates.

The Convener moved to the vote on recommendations, taken by roll call, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i) To note the progress of the Accessibility Strategy Action Plan as agreed at Education Committee in February 2020;
- ii) To approve the proposed extension of the 2020-2023 Accessibility Strategy Action Plan to cover the 2023-2026 period due to the disruption of COVID-19; and
- iii) To approve the proposed amendments to the Inclusion Policy following feedback from LGBT Youth Scotland

4. SOUTH EAST IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE (SEIC) 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 2022-2023.

Lesley Brown, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, provided the annual update on the South East Improvement Collaborative, including the new SEIC Regional Improvement Plan 2022-23. Ms Brown explained that the SEIC was not an entity in its own right but was allocated a budget which was mostly used for staffing, adding that East Lothian Council had benefited from a full time Quality Improvement Officer, Ms Thomson, who represented East Lothian in the SEIC 70% of the time, with the remaining 30% being devoted to specific East Lothian work. Ms Brown noted that Fiona Robertson had now taken over in Midlothian as the strategic lead for the SEIC and would be in post until June 2023, and that Councillor Dugdale had taken over as Chief of the SEIC Oversight Group. She highlighted the two key priorities identified using the data from across all five authorities as Literacy and Learning Pathways and Positive Destinations, and explained these provided opportunities for schools across the SEIC to work with each other. Ms Brown added that bespoke supports for schools this session had been implemented with a focus on the two agreed areas through a range of SEIC connector programmes. She advised that East Lothian schools had engaged well with the work of the SEIC and had benefited from a variety of collaborative professional learning activities which had added value beyond the support our education service was able to offer.

Councillor Yorkston asked how East Lothian contributes to the SEIC and what it gains from it, and asked Ms Brown's view on its overall effectiveness. Ms Brown stated that the effectiveness of the SEIC had improved over the years as they have been able to analyse the data in a more coherent way and bring skill sets from local authorities into the key quality improvement roles which has really helped the effectiveness; therefore, her view was that the SEIC is effective as it adds value to what the Council is able to offer and allows the Council to collaborate and share best practice with other authorities. Ms Brown stated that East Lothian had been a strong contributor to the SEIC as they have a lot of schools involved which allows them to present the excellent work going on within East Lothian.

Councillor McIntosh asked about the new tri-nation approach and the rationale for teams. Ms Brown explained that the approach of the tri-nation work emanated from work Fiona Robertson in Midlothian had been involved in regarding an initiative

focused on school improvement in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It had been recognised across the SEIC Board that Scotland should be looking outwards both nationally and internationally to what works elsewhere. She added this aspect was still in its infancy but that there was a desire to connect with and learn from others.

Councillor Menzies gave feedback that the term 'looked after child' was again used within the report instead of the preferred term of 'care experienced'.

Councillor McIntosh thanked officers for the report, remarking that she considered that the regional collaboration was complimentary to the Council's own school improvement strategy.

Councillor Dugdale commented that East Lothian had benefited from sharing practice in delivering improvement through the SEIC, and thanked all those who had contributed. She added that it was helpful to hear that the work of the collaborative was complimentary to East Lothian's own priorities and also that it was very important to see the work developing within Early Learning.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i) To note the SEIC Regional Improvement Plan 2022-2023; and
- ii) To note 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.

5. 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.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations) reported that new Head Teachers had been appointed to Aberlady and Yester Primary Schools and the Wallyford Learning Campus. Mr Parker noted that the Head Teacher for Aberlady Primary School would take up the post in January and the other two were already in post.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

Signed

Councillor Fiona Dugdale
Convener of the Education Committee

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