



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EDUCATION & CHILDRENS SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER, 10:00am
VIA HYBRID SYSTEM**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor Bennett
Councillor Dugdale – Convener
Councillor Findlay
Councillor Gilbert
Councillor Hampshire
Councillor McFarlane
Councillor McIntosh
Councillor Menzies
Councillor Ritchie
Councillor Yorkston
Mr S Gilmour-Jack
Rev D Hamilton

Council Officials Present:

Ms N McDowell - Head of Education
Ms L Byrne – Head of Children’s Services
Mr N Trussler – Quality Improvement Officer, Education
Ms J Boyle – Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion
Ms A Cameron – Service Manager – Early Years and Childcare
Ms B Skirrow - Principal Officer (Education Service)
Ms A Harrison – Principal Education Psychologist
Ms S Morgan – Head Teacher, Ormiston Primary School
Ms C Rodgers – Strategic Lead, Prevention
Ms H Barnett – Head of Corporate Support
Mr E John – Head of Communities and Partnerships
Ms J Fraser – General Manager, Children’s Services
Ms K Haspolat – Quality Improvement Officer
Ms D Govenlock – Connected Communities Manager
M E Laverie – Youth Development Officer

Teachers Present:

Ms D Mercer – Head Teacher, Campie Primary School
Ms A Kay – Head Teacher, Stenton Primary School

Clerk:

Ms M Scott
Ms E Barclay

Other Elected Members present:

N/A

Apologies:

Councillor Bruce
Councillor Cassini
Rev G Sheridan

Declarations of Interest:

None

Prior to the commencement of business, the Clerk advised that the meeting was being held using the Council's hybrid system and 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 five years from the date of the meeting.

The Clerk recorded attendance of committee members by roll call.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee, particularly Debbie Mercer, Head Teacher at Campie Primary School and Amy Kay, Head Teacher at Stenton Primary School.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 10 JUNE 2025

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 10 June 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

2. YOUTH VISION YOUTH WORK STRATEGY 2026-2029

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive, Children and Communities to approve and adopt the East Lothian Youth Vision, a co-produced three-year strategy for Youth Work from 2026 to 2029 that reflects current and emerging youth work priorities.

Mr Eamon John, Head of Communities and Partnerships provided Members with a summary of the report drawing Members attention to the national youth work outcomes, the impact and importance of youth work specifically building confidence and life skills, forming trusted relationships, feeling valued, respected and listened to. He highlighted that the youth vision strategy was co-developed by young people, youth organisations, the Council and key partners.

Mr John and his colleagues Diann Govenlock, Connected Communities Manager and Emma Laverie, Youth Development Officer answered questions from Members. They provided information on how they recruit volunteers to help with youth work, how they target the hardest to reach young people, targeted work around equality and how youth workers engage the quieter young people.

Mr John and his colleagues continued to answer questions from Members relating to funding and inclusion for non-statutory youth work and provided thorough information on the communication with schools regarding support young people and their involvement in youth work. Ms Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion also highlighted the work of the child planning framework locality teams

in being a key component of service delivery as they meet regularly to identify any children and young people who they feel would benefit from youth work. She also provided information on the mechanisms used to capture all children and young people, even those who were not engaging in school and noted the links formed between education and youth justice teams. Mr John was unable to advise Members on what the budget impacts to youth work may be as everything will need to be considered and looked at but said there would be a continued focus on priorities that make a real difference and would raise mapping the spend across the region as an action at partnership meetings.

Ms Laverie shared the views of young people regarding their safety and wanting a place at the table to ensure their voices are being heard.

Members welcomed the report, noting its importance and the refreshing take on it being co-designed with young people. They were reassured by the answers given from officers today and felt the work that had been so far should be congratulated.

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

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the contents of the report including the extensive consultation and engagement carried out with young people.
- Approve the Youth Vision as East Lothian's Youth Work Strategy 2026-2029.
- Note that the governance of the Youth Vision will sit with East Lothian Partnership through the Community Learning and Development Partnership.

3. EDUCATION SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive, Children and Communities to seek the Committee's approval of the Education Service Progress Report and Improvement Plan on key improvement priorities achieved for session 2024/25 and identification of key improvement priorities planned for session 2025/26.

Following presentation by the Head of Education, Nicola McDowell, officers responded to questions from Members regarding the work to achieve the Rights Respecting School awards, how we are managing the increase of children within education settings with additional support needs, distanced learning and how Education Outreach Officers assist with that, the work that was being carried out through the learning estate strategy to bring the remaining 20% of school buildings up to good or satisfactory and impactful work to close the poverty related attainment gap. Ms Boyle also provided information on funding from the Scottish Government to meet the growing needs of young people within our schools.

Ms McDowell confirmed she would be happy to arrange a workshop for Members regarding the work that was being developed and delivered and that a verbal update would be presented to Council in December in terms of mobile phone use in schools and phone free learning environments with a Learning Connected paper coming to Education and Children's Services Committee in March.

The report was welcomed by Members, particularly the amplifying of pupil voice and the work of Rights Respecting Schools, the monitoring and intervention of those

effected by poverty, care experience and additional support needs and the positive work of the Education Outreach team.

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

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the overall positive progress made by the Education Service in delivery of the Council's Plan, the Education Progress and Improvement Plan 2024/25 and the priorities within the National Improvement Framework.
- Note the steps being taken to secure continuous improvement in session 2025/26.
- Approve the Progress Report and Improvement Plan 2025/26.
- 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.

4. FOSTERING IN EAST LoTHIAN

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive for Children and Communities to share the Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Care annual report 2025/25 with the Education and Children's Services Committee.

Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services presented her report, drawing Members attention to the introduction of a dedicated play therapy service for children, a new child-centred approach to planning transitions for children. the newly launched parent partner scheme and the reduction in the use of independent foster care agencies and the increase in kinship carers being approved.

There followed questions from Members on the new in-house play therapy base, supports offered to kinship carers, the continued work to recruit foster carers for teenagers, the parent partner scheme and she provided information on how to become a panel member for our fostering, kinship and adoption panels.

The progress and success in recruitment and training was welcomed by Members. They congratulated Ms Byrne on a wonderful report, noting it shone from a children and families perspective, and they found it a very uplifting read.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the dedication and resilience of East Lothian's caring community, acknowledging the life changing difference they make to our children and young people.
- Note the wide range of work undertaken by the fostering, adoption and kinship care workforce and their commitment to keep The Promise.
- Note the Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Care annual report.

5. BELONGING TO EAST LoTHIAN: AN OVERVIEW

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive for Children and Communities to provide Members with an overview of the latest phase of Belonging to East Lothian, an East Lothian approach which focuses on prevention and early intervention for children, young people and families.

Caroline Rodgers, Strategic Lead, Prevention provided Members with a summary of her report drawing their attention to the successful work that has reduced the number of young people in external residential care.

Ms Rodgers answered questions from Members relating to whole family support, the savings from investing in prevention work and external funding sources for transformation work.

Members welcomed the report, noting the great progress of this work since its inception and the positive of East Lothian leading in this area.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF CAMPIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive for Children and Communities to report to Committee on the outcomes of the Education Scotland re-visit inspection of Campie Primary School and Nursery Class.

Following presentation from Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer. Officers responded to questions relating to staff and school community morale, the work of the Pedagogy team, the work of the Council Education Service prior to the initial inspection from Education Scotland and how staff had been supported with training.

Members welcomed the report, noting the steady progress and improvements made within the school. They were heartened to see the mention of training and professional development opportunities across the school and thanked Ms Mercer and her team for their dedication and unrelenting efforts to achieve improvements for the children, families and staff.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the content of the Education Scotland letter
- Note the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team and progress made since the inspection
- Note that because of the inspection findings, Education Scotland will not make a follow-up visit in connection with this inspection

7. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF STENTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive for Children and Communities to report to Committee on the outcomes of the Education Scotland Inspection of Stenton Primary School.

Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer presented the report and drew Members attention to the evaluative gradings against quality indicators, the key strengths found during inspection and the identified areas for continued improvement. He concluded his presentation by confirming his continued commitment to working with the school to provide advice, support and challenge.

Mr Trussler answered a question from Councillor Hampshire relating to resources available within the school to make the recommended improvements. He was confident the school had the capacity to fulfil the planned improvement journey.

Members welcomed the report giving thanks to the Head Teacher, Ms Kay and her staff for their excellent job in gaining a positive report. They highlighted how well Ms Kay handled the inspection as she was newly in post and praised her quality and calmness while it was carried out.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the content of the Education Scotland letter published on 4 November 2025.
- Note the key strengths of the school identified by the Inspection Team.
- Note the Summary of Inspection Findings detailing strengths and recommended future developments.
- Note that because of the inspection findings, Education Scotland will not make a follow-up visit in connection with this inspection.

8. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive for Children and Communities to seek Committee approval of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Ms Nicola McDowell, Head of Education presented her report highlighting the appointment of Ms Amy Kay as Head Teacher for Innerwick and Stenton Primary Schools, Debbie Mercer as Head Teacher of Campie Primary School and Ms Claire Palmer-Fairbairn as the Head Teacher for St Martin’s Primary School. She also noted since the submission of the report Mr Jamie Orr had been put forward as the preferred candidate for Head Teacher at Yester Primary School.

Councillor Dugdale congratulated the new appointments and wished them well in their new schools. She also thanked the Parent Council members for their help in the recruitment process.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

Signed

Councillor Fiona Dugdale
Convener of the Education & Children’s Services Committee