

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 5 February 2015.**

**Present:**

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Councillor Vincent Waters
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Reverend Thomas Boyle
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Alan Lafferty	Mr Alan Munro

Councillor Green in the Chair

**Attending:**

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; John Fitzpatrick, Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision); Marie Kelly, Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement); Mark Ratter, Education Senior Manager (Planning and Reporting); Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Ms Sharon Hunter, Head Teacher, Busby Primary School; Ms Catherine Dillon-Ruddy, Head Teacher, Mearns Primary School; and Mr Andy Sinclair, Head Teacher, Barrhead High School.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Danny Devlin, Mary Montague and Jim Swift.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1394.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**BUSBY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS - EDUCATION SCOTLAND AND CARE INSPECTORATE REPORT**

**1395.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education regarding the inspection report prepared by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate following their inspection of Busby Primary School and Nursery Class in October 2014. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The report explained that in assessing the indicators of quality in the primary school, all 5 aspects of the work were judged to be very good. In the nursery class, 3 aspects were judged to be very good whilst the remaining 2 were judged as good. The inspection team had highlighted a number of particular strengths including confident and articulate children who were keen to take responsibility for their own learning; attainment in English language, mathematics and science; an ethos of achievement where children were leading improvements in the school; partnership working which was supporting a relevant and vibrant curriculum; and innovative and creative approaches by the head teacher which were preparing children well for the future.

An action plan, a copy of which accompanied the report, had been prepared to address the agreed area for improvement.

Councillor Green, supported by other members of the committee, congratulated all those associated with this outstanding report which reflected well on the staff, pupils, and the wider community, explaining that the school was at the very heart of the local community.

Ms Hunter, Head Teacher, explained that everyone connected with the school was delighted with the report which reflected the passion of all concerned; thanked the committee for its support and positive comments; and commended the hard work of staff, pupils, parents, the wider community, the Education Department Directorate and the QIOs.

The committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the contents of the Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate report on Busby Primary School and Nursery Class; and
- (b) approve the school's action plan to address the agreed area for improvement.

#### **FUTURE DENOMINATIONAL (CATHOLIC) PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH NON-DENOMINATIONAL PRE-FIVE PROVISION IN NEWTON MEARN'S AND RELOCATION OF CALDERWOOD LODGE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS TO WATERFOOT ROAD, NEWTON MEARN'S – CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE CONSULTATIVE PROPOSAL**

**1396.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 30 September 2014 (Page 1177, Item 1235 refers), when the committee had agreed that the Director undertake a consultation exercise relative to proposals for the creation of a denominational primary school with associated non-denominational pre-five provision in Newton Mearns and the relocation of Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class all to a site on Waterfoot Road, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education, summarising the outcome of the consultation exercise that had been carried out. A copy of the full report that had been prepared following the consultation exercise accompanied the report.

The director's report provided summary details of the 450 responses received to the consultation. It was noted that the majority of respondents to the consultation, including statutory consultees, were supportive of the proposals. The main reasons for either supporting or being opposed to the proposals were summarised. It was noted that of the views expressed in favour of the proposals, agreement with the faith campus approach, agreeing with the need for a new Catholic primary school to address demand, and helping to address capacity issues at St Cadoc's Primary School, were the main themes. For those who did not support the proposals, relocation of Calderwood Lodge due to the small number of East Renfrewshire pupils, concerns around traffic, and disagreement with the faith campus approach were the main themes.

The report outlined the implications for St Ninian's High School as a result of the additional Catholic primary school, particularly in relation to placing requests, and clarified that the Education Department would continue to keep the sufficiency of denominational places under review.

The report also outlined the financial implications of the proposals confirming that funding had been made available in the Council's Capital Plan, and reminded members of the committee that the Waterfoot Road site had been included in the proposed East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.

The Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) advised the committee that, since the report had been prepared, the Planning Reporter had confirmed that the site at Waterfoot Road was suitable as a school site.

Councillor Fletcher referred to the positive comments received from the school communities and the wider community in Newton Mearns in response to the consultation and welcomed the decision from the Planning Reporter about the preferred site thereby facilitating the faith schools' joint campus proposal. However, he referred to concerns which had been expressed within the local community regarding possible increased pupil numbers at St. Ninian's High School in the future and how this could be managed in the long term to ensure that pupils from the new denominational primary school would gain entry. Although noting there were sufficient places over the medium term, he suggested that options for entry to St. Ninian's High School should be explored even though they may not take effect for a number of years. In response, the Director of Education welcomed this point for action and confirmed that she would continue to consider options legally available as part of the authority's commitment to ensure sufficient denominational places. She advised that this would be kept under regular review and if and when necessary this would be carried out. Following an analysis of need, an exploration of options would be undertaken and reported to the committee in due course.

A number of other members expressed their support for this unique joint faith campus proposal and thanked the Catholic Church, the Jewish Community and the parents and pupils of Calderwood Lodge and St. Cadoc's Primary Schools for their support during the consultation period.

On behalf of the Diocese of Paisley, Father Boyle expressed his gratitude that a denominational primary school would be built in Newton Mearns and that this would form part of a joint campus. He advised that a shared campus would contribute to the already strong relationships which existed between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community in this and other areas. However, although he welcomed the addition of another denominational primary school in the area, he hoped that resources would be found to refurbish St. Cadoc's Primary School and noted the undertaking given by the Director to seek funding in the Council's Capital Plan. Furthermore, he sought a reassurance that procedures to ensure denominational entry in the future would be considered, although he acknowledged the potential human rights issues associated with this. He highlighted that, as far as he was aware, no other joint faith campus of this type existed anywhere else in the world and this historic decision would nurture feelings of co-existence, mutual respect and understanding between people of different faiths.

Mr Angell added that the Jewish community had been extremely pleased with the outcome of the consultation and again highlighted the excellent relationships which existed between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) to note that the site at Waterfoot Road, Newton Mearns had been deemed suitable by the Planning Reporter;
- (b) to the proposal as set out in the original consultation document for a joint faith campus at Waterfoot Road, Newton Mearns from school session 2017/18 undertaking further design consultation and the due planning process, with the Calderwood Lodge building closing at the end of 2016/17;
- (c) that the Director of Education consult with the appropriate union(s) to agree appropriate staffing for the new denominational primary school and nursery class, with the appointment of a head teacher and senior staff being taken forward as appropriate with the parent council;
- (d) that the Director of Education agrees with the Catholic Church and pupils at St Cadoc's Primary School the name of the new primary school and reports this to a future meeting of the Education Committee;
- (e) that the Director of Education bring forward a report to a future meeting about the consultative proposal to establish a non-denominational nursery class at St Cadoc's Primary School facilitated through remodelling the existing accommodation as the school reduces from 3 stream provision;
- (f) to note that the Director of Education would continue to seek resources to refurbish educational spaces as required at St Cadoc's primary School for consideration as part of the Councils capital planning process; and
- (g) that the Director of Education continue to review the sufficiency of denominational places and if and when necessary bring forward a paper to a future meeting reporting on an analysis of need and options for entry to denominational Catholic schools.

## **PARENTING STRATEGY ANNUAL REVIEW**

**1397.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 January 2013 (Page 370, Item 383 refers), when the committee had approved the draft Parenting Strategy, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on progress in the implementation of the strategy.

Having reminded the committee of the strategy's 4 clear objectives and explained how the strategy tied in to the East Renfrewshire Single Outcome Agreement, the report summarised the steps taken to date to implement the strategy as well as outlining and seeking approval for the way in which the strategy would be taken forward.

Councillor Lafferty referred to the joint working which had taken place within the Council and NHS to implement the strategy highlighting that the results so far were very encouraging. In response to a question from Councillor McCaskill regarding introduction of the Universal Named Person Scheme, the Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) confirmed that consultation on the Bill, which included reference to the Named Person Scheme, was currently out for consultation. It was anticipated that introduction of a named person would be well received and that the named person would support parents in their role and provide guidance and assistance.

The committee:-

- (a) noted the report; and
- (b) approved the next steps as set out in the report.

## **RAISING THE ATTAINMENT OF THE LOWEST PERFORMING 20 PERCENT**

**1398.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing details of progress that had been made between 2010/11 and 2013/14 in raising the attainment levels of the lowest performing 20 percent, and the strategies used and good practice developed by establishments to support that cohort, particularly during 2013/14.

The report referred to the department's vision statement *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* which reflected the commitment and expectation that all learners would be supported to maximise their potential. It also referred to the commitment to improvement attainment levels of the lowest performing 20%, reflected in Local Improvement Plans including the current 2014/17 plan.

Thereafter, the report set out a high level summary of the progress of schools in raising the attainment of the lowest performing children and young people from 2010/11 to 2013/14. A summary of performance results accompanied the report.

In particular, the report referred to the way in which performance and tracking information was used to identify children and young people in each establishment who were in the lowest performing 20%. It also outlined some of the work carried out in conjunction with partner agencies such as the Community Health and Care Partnership, to support nursery staff to develop their skills in interacting with children.

It was noted that specific funding had been provided by the Council to improve the performance of the lowest 20%, and the report set out some of the different methods and strategies that had been used by head teachers to support their lowest performing children and young people. This included supplementary reading and mathematics resources, additional staffing to develop parent engagement, and additional IT resources, amongst other things.

The report referred to the considerable progress that had been made by 2013/14 towards improving the performance of all pupils with a focus on the lowest attaining 20% and listed a number of key highlights as well as a number of areas where further improvement/development was considered necessary.

The Convener introduced Mr Sinclair, Head Teacher, Barrhead High School and Mrs Dillon-Ruddy, Head Teacher, Mearns Primary School, who gave presentations on the progress made within their schools in raising attainment for the lowest performing 20%.

Mr Sinclair reported progress being made in raising attainment within Barrhead High School and referred to tools which could be used to identify pupils in the lowest performing 20%, including standardised testing and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. In order to raise attainment, staff had been supported and trained by Educational Psychologists and nurture groups had been established. Pupils within the nurture groups became more engaged with the curriculum, which in turn led to better engagement with parents, and exclusions were reduced. A reading recovery programme had also been established to work intensively with a small group of pupils who required additional support with reading, as a result of which their reading skills and self-confidence had increased significantly.

Thereafter, Mrs Dillon-Ruddy advised that schools had received additional funding to support the lowest performing children and young people and, in Mearns Primary School, this money had been used to establish innovative ICT projects. A two year programme providing additional teacher support in ICT had been introduced and the kindle programme had been extended for reluctant readers. Subscriptions were made to Education City which offered online education services in different subjects, and parents were encouraged to buy into the homework programme to track their child's progress. A library re-launch in the school would allow children to borrow kindles, and further innovation and creative use of technology would be explored, including investigating how tablet technology could improve skills.

In response to a question from Councillor McCaskill regarding the reading recovery programme, the Director of Education advised that pupils with a low reading age would have been identified when entering secondary school and the additional resources provided through the reading recovery programme would assist these pupils. She referred to the introduction of Hanen ABC to provide improved language skills for young children and would allow literacy problems to be addressed at an earlier educational stage in future.

Mr Munro advised that it was important to highlight the improvements which could be made with additional resources but that many of these improvements were non-statutory and teacher time was critical. Referring to current discussions in the media regarding threats to teacher numbers, Mr Munro highlighted that this would lead to larger class sizes, more stress for teachers and higher teacher absences. He advised that achievement in East Renfrewshire was dependent on maintaining teacher numbers and that the current message was disheartening.

Having heard Councillor Green thank Mr Sinclair and Mrs Dillon-Ruddy for their presentations, the committee agreed to note Education Department's progress in raising the attainment of the lowest performing 20% from 2010-11 to 2013-14.

CHAIR