

THE FIFE COUNCIL - EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2 (FHM05.002), 5th Floor, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

7 May 2024

10.00 am – 12.55 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Kathleen Leslie (Convener), Lynn Ballantyne-Wardlaw, Aude Boubaker-Calder, Ian Cameron, Eugene Clarke, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Sean Dillon, Linda Erskine, Alycia Hayes, James Leslie, Ann Verner (substituting for Councillor Louise Kennedy-Dalby), Lynn Mowatt, Sarah Neal, Alistair Suttie, Daniel Wilson and Mary Caldwell, Religious Interest Representative.

ATTENDING: Maria Lloyd, Head of Education Services - Secondary Schools and Specialist Support, Angela Logue, Head of Education - Primary Schools and Improvement Support, Jennifer Wilson, Headteacher and Vicky Cromar, Principal Teacher, Supporting Learners Service; Karen Lees, Education Manager, Stuart Booker, Quality Improvement Officer, Andrew Booth, Depute Headteacher, Balwearie High School, Sarah Else, Education Manager, Gavin Waterston, Quality Improvement Officer (Health, Wellbeing and Child Protection), Education Services; and Diane Barnet, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Louise Kennedy-Dalby.

85. CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP

The committee noted that Councillor Altany Craik had replaced Councillor Patrick Browne as a member of this committee and welcomed him to his first meeting.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 22.

87. MINUTE

The committee considered the minute of meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee of 5 March 2024.

Decision

The committee agreed to approve the minute.

88. REPORT ON SUPPORTING REFUGEE, ASYLUM SEEKING AND DISPLACED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Secondary Schools and Specialist Support) providing an update on the current support provided to refugee, asylum seeking and displaced children and young people with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in education, and the establishments, schools and provisions that they attended.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the information provided in the report; and
- (2) requested a further progress report in March 2025.

89. DESTINATIONS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Secondary Schools and Specialist Support) providing an update on the destinations of leavers from Fife schools for session 2022/23.

The report also provided an overview of the range of strategies used to support the Service's key priority to improve the rates of positive and sustained destinations.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised, reviewed and commented on the progress made over the last 12 months and the work of various groups in supporting this;
- (2) noted the next steps of this education area;
- (3) agreed to encourage ward members to engage with their secondary schools about their positive destinations and related work; and
- (4) delegated to officers to link with better performing, social, economically and geographically similar Scottish Local Authorities to enquire about what is working in their area which may be relevant for Fife and to arrange for committee members to visit any initiatives, as appropriate.

The committee adjourned at 12.45 pm and reconvened at 1.00 pm.

Councillor Craik re-entered the meeting and Councillor Erskine left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

90. STRATEGIC EQUITY FUND – SESSION 2023/24 PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Primary Schools and Improvement Support), providing an overview of the progress made in the delivery of the Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2023/24 to support the closing of the poverty-related attainment gap within Fife educational settings.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised the progress made in the Strategic Equity Fund 2023/24 plan;
- (2) noted areas of success and progress, as well as the actions taken to ensure continued improvement;
- (3) delegated to officers to arrange a member workshop relating to home schooling; and
- (4) delegated to officers to engage with North Lanarkshire Council relating to their provision and development of virtual classrooms, arranging a visit for committee members, as appropriate.

91. ATTENDANCE UPDATE REPORT APRIL 2024

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Primary Schools and Improvement Support) providing an update on the progress of attendance of children and young people in schools across Fife as requested by this committee at its meeting of 22 August 2023.

The report included a comparison to the national attendance data provided by the Scottish Government in March 2024.

The report also outlined the ongoing work being carried out centrally and by all Fife schools to keep this as a focus in line with its key Priority 2 - 'Improving Attendance and Engagement' as detailed in the Education and Children's Services Directorate Improvement Plan 2023-26.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised the attendance data and information provided in the report;
- (2) supported the ongoing work both centrally and by schools in improving attendance; and
- (3) acknowledged that a further progress report would be available for its consideration in March 2025 and not August/September 2024 as indicated in the report – said report to include information relating to the Fife Literary Review research currently being carried out and due to conclude by February 2025.

92. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services supporting the committee's consideration of the workplan for future meetings of the committee.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the workplan and suggestions were invited from members of the committee for future areas of scrutiny; and
- (2) agreed that the following reports be added to the workplan for the meeting on 18 March 2025:
 - as outlined at Para. No. 88 (2) – 'Supporting Refugee, Asylum Seeking and displaced young people with English as an Additional Language in Education'; and
 - as outlined at Para. No. 91 (3) – 'Attendance Update'.