

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE OF MEETING of the MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT held in BRAES HIGH SCHOOL on FRIDAY 24 MAY 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Blackwood, G Goldie and Nimmo.

ATTENDING: Margaret Coutts; Reverend Rollo; Martin Craigen (Parent Representative), Nigel Fletcher, Head of Educational Support and Improvement, Alex Black, Quality Improvement Manager; Helen McCulloch, Headteacher, Braes High School; David Ironside, Marjory Cotter, Christine Heron and Elizabeth Naismith Depute Headteachers, Braes High School and Shona Barton, Committee Services Officer.

CONVENER: Councillor Nimmo.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors Alexander, Black, Coleman, Jackson, Mahoney, C Martin, Dr C R Martin and Spears; Fiona Craig (Teacher Representative); Hector Cairns (Religious Representative) and Jude Ainsley (Parent Representative).

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Convener welcomed all in attendance.

3. MINUTE

There was submitted (circulated) and **NOTED** Minute of Meeting of the Member/Officer Working Group on Educational Achievement held on 22 February 2013.

4. BRAES CLUSTER – BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Helen McCulloch, Headteacher introduced the team at Braes High School and provided the Group with an overview of the history of the school. The presentation included the following information:-

- That Braes was one of the first PFI schools in the Falkirk area
- Staff and pupils from Woodlands high school transferred over
- The school was not doing well academically and there was little sense of community
- In 2005 became a government school of ambition

- Pupils and staff worked together to change the school, starting with a competition for a new motto “build respect and earn success” and “be part of it” were chosen as winners
- Entered a restorative approaches pilot with Larbert high school
- Within a short period the school had changed
- Attainment figures were initially poor but started building results and the school is now in the top half of results in Falkirk Council

The Group then heard a presentation from David Ironside, Depute Headteacher on Effective Learning and Teaching at Braes, which covered the following:-

- Continuous Personal Development (CPD)
- General training and Working Groups
- Assessment for Learning (AFL) introduced in 2007
 - Sharing good practice sessions
 - AFL fairs within the school during in-service sessions
 - Staff evaluation lessons
 - Giving pupils skills and abilities to assess own learning
- In 2008 the Lead Teacher scheme introduced and several projects and CPD opportunities put in place throughout the school, this is grounded in:-
 - Professional development
 - Self reflection
 - Critical reflection
 - Pupil engagement
 - Active learning
- The aim to get away from the traditional methods of teaching
- This project ran from 2008 to 2010 and trained around 70 staff
- Looked to engage pupils in lessons to impact on motivation and ultimately performance
- Over last 3 years a number of staff have been trained as Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) Facilitators
- 6 TLC groups within the school and almost all staff are now part of a group
- TLC’s continue to work with staff on AFL and learning for deeper understanding

Discussion took place on how to engage more of the teaching staff and the issues surrounding temporary, probationary and supply teachers being part of the TLC groups.

The Group then heard a presentation from Marjory Cotter, Depute Headteacher on Boosting Attainment, which covered the following:-

- Class teachers gather a lot of information
- Learning actively, at start of session agree what targets are with pupils
- Regularly monitor throughout lessons
- Tracking report and full reports produced in conjunction with parents’ nights
- A range of additional resources available to pupils including after school sessions and the library and resource centre
- The work of the mentoring programme

- The important role of the faculty and pastoral heads
- Statistical analysis undertaken following the publication of exam results

The Group then heard a presentation from Elizabeth Naismith, Depute Headteacher on Curriculum for Excellence, which covered the following:-

- Following the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, staff looked at the methodology used
- At staff meetings it was important to be aware of what other departments were doing
- Work was undertaken to link with other departments and subjects
- Aim to get teachers to come out of teaching in a subject box
- The core skill areas of numeracy, literacy and health & well being were used by every teacher
- Staff embraced the opportunity to revise courses
- Way forward to create a broad general curriculum for S1 to S3 to give pupils experience of a range of subjects before making their choice for the senior phase
- Number of events held for parents
- Focus groups with parents organised for first cohort
- Revised courses started in 2010
- These courses were taught, evaluated and revised and this was extra workload for staff
- Exam exemplification from SQA, teachers are now checking that the courses are fit for new qualification
- Learning content to develop the skills for life, work and learning
- Next challenge is to make sure that school is assessing these skills
- Children should leave school prepared for world

Discussion took place on the extra paperwork involved as a result of the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and on the work that is being carried out for children who are non-academic.

The Group then heard a presentation from Christine Heron, Depute Headteacher on Pupil Support, which covered the following:-

- The school adheres to Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and Safe, Healthy Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected and Included (SHANNARI)
- The work of the Pastoral team
- The work of the support for learning team
- Open doors – a confidential listening service funded by the lottery
- Campus police officer recently appointed
- Attendance at 92.6% which is the second highest in the Authority
- Exclusions are the lowest in the Authority at 13 per 1000
- Friends at Braes and the active Parent Council

The Working Group then watched a montage of photographs which detailed the work and achievements of the school and pupils.

Finally, the Working Group heard a presentation from Alisha Angus and Courtney Russell, sixth year pupils at the school, which covered the following:-

- Braes grades have vastly improved
- Broad range of subjects offered
- Teachers always looking to engage classes
- Teachers invest time in pupils
- Great respect and support between teachers and pupils
- Wide range of extra-curricular activities offered
- Braes awards for junior pupils
- Saltire Awards for volunteering which are recognised by Scottish Government
- Debating success at Scottish level
- School trips, Prom, Burns Supper and Ceilidh for senior pupils
- Literacy showcase and Sports day

The Working Group then sat in on a lesson in the Drama department with some senior pupils and Ms Taylor and Mrs Eckles.

Members of the Working Group thanked Mrs McCulloch and her staff for the interesting and informative presentations.