

S44. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION REPORTS AND ACTION PLANS

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing information on Education Scotland inspections at St Mary's RC Primary School and Bo'ness Academy which had identified at least one category in each case as 'weak'. The report provided, as appendices:-

- Inspection Letter: St Mary's RC Primary School and Nursery Class;
- Action Plan: St Mary's RC Primary School and Nursery Class;
- Inspection Letter: Bo'ness Academy, and
- Action Plan: Bo'ness Academy.

Robert Naylor provided an overview of the report and introduced Julie Hanlon, Head Teacher, St. Mary's RC Primary School and Catriona Reid, Depute Head Teacher, Bo'ness Academy.

The committee then heard from Julie Hanlon regarding progress made against the action plan at St Mary's RC Primary School. Members asked what support had been available to the school from the Service. Catherine Quinn stated that there had been a team around the school in place who had first worked through the positives noted in the inspection and then addressed the action points. The Head Teacher had identified areas which required extra support. Catherine Quinn and Tony Bragg had delivered sessions to the school's staff on leadership and use of data respectively. Support was given as needed.

Members asked about the impact on resources as a result of the number of children with English as a second language at the school. Julie Hanlon stated that the school had worked closely with the bi-lingual support team. The school's teachers were skilled in dealing with the challenges associated with this area and that parents with English as a second language were very engaged with the school. She commented that there was a disadvantage in standardised testing to children with English as a second language and that it was important to understand the story behind the figures.

The committee sought further information on the assessment by Education Scotland of the curricular offering. Robert Naylor stated that Education Scotland evaluated all aspects of the school under eight broad headings. Inspectors evaluated both the content balance and pace of curriculum delivery in school and considered how much time was spent on literacy and numeracy proportionately.

Members asked how adherence to timescales in the action plan was monitored. Catherine Quinn stated that the Service monitored these timescales carefully and Julie Hanlon advised that the school provided feedback to the team around the school frequently as progress occurred.

In response to comments on the integration of the nursery into the school, Julie Hanlon stated that the initiatives also applied to the nursery and that the Depute Head Teacher, who managed the nursery provision and the Senior Early Years Officer were involved in joint planning with the school. Further, the nursery used the school's computer suite, hall and library.

Following a question on continuous professional development, Catherine Quinn advised that all teachers were met with on an annual basis and plans for development were linked to the needs of the individual and school. The Council had links with Glasgow University, a good leadership course locally and used the approach of personal action research.

The committee thanked Julie Hanlon for her attendance and contributions.

The committee then heard from Catriona Reid regarding progress made against the action plan at Bo'ness Academy.

Members asked what work had been undertaken to ensure that the curriculum was meeting the needs of all. Catriona Reid stated that there had been a review of the overall curriculum and that vocational routes had been considered as well as participation in the Schools College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) programme.

In response to a question on the Children's University, Catriona Reid stated that this was a cluster project aimed at raising aspiration. The project targeted children at the upper stage of primary school. A pupil passport would be issued to children who would get their passport stamped when they visited places like libraries and upon completion of certain tasks. This would lead to participation in a graduation ceremony at Forth Valley College. The project also operated for young people in second year at high school, the graduation ceremony for this group was to be at Stirling University.

The committee discussed nurture classes and asked for information on the approach at Bo'ness Academy. Catriona Reid stated that there were nurture groups in place with different groups for the different year groups. There was a group who went to St Mary's RC Primary School, accompanied by staff, to do a gardening project and a similar project was in place at Blackness Primary School. Children were identified at the transition stage for inclusion in the nurture groups and the school worked with Community Learning & Development who provided other services in the school.

Members commented that attainment at Bo'ness Academy had fallen out of line with that of the authority's other high schools and asked about staff morale. Catriona Reid stated that there had been significant improvements at Bo'ness Academy over a long period and that there was a good atmosphere at the school, although she commented that there was an opportunity to instil an ethos of greater challenge. She stated that staff changes and new management had brought new ideas and fresh approaches which would drive the school forward. She advised that there would be a revised approach taken to course selection where the students would have a one to one meeting to consider their options which included individual prelim analysis and how they could best be supported.

The committee asked how the school would address the perception that parental and staff expectations were not very high. Catriona Reid advised that there had been a meet the Head Teacher evening which had engaged parents. Two careers events had been held with employers, colleges and universities and a UCAS evening had also been held. The turnout for these events was felt to be significant and had resulted in positive engagement with parents. The school had also been using its twitter feed to provide careers information.

The committee thanked Catriona Reid for her attendance and contributions.

Decision

The committee agreed to request that the Director of Children's Services:-

- (i) provide an update on the progress made on the agreed action plans to the committee on 17 November 2016, and**
- (ii) report back to committee following publication of Education Scotland's subsequent inspection letters.**

Provost Reid left the meeting during consideration of the previous item of business.