

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 29 JANUARY 2013 at 9.30 A.M.

PRESENT: Provost Reid; Councillors Alexander, Blackwood, Buchanan, Carleschi, Chalmers, Gow, Hughes, Jackson, Dr C R Martin, and Nimmo.

**REPRESENTATIVES
OF RELIGIOUS
BODIES:**

H Cairns, M Coutts and Rev M Rollo.

CO-OPTEES: F Craig and M Smith (Teacher Representatives); J Ainsley and M Craigen (Parent Representatives).

CONVENER: Councillor Nimmo.

ATTENDING: Director of Education Services; Heads of Educational Support and Improvement, and of Educational Planning and Resources; Accountancy Services Manager (B Heron); Senior Solicitor (F Kobiela); Senior Forward Planning Officer; Quality Improvement Officer (T Bragg); Depute Chief Governance Officer, and Committee Services Officer (S Barton).

ALSO

ATTENDING: Susan Orr, Depute Rector and Jo Latimer, Principal Teacher of Health & Wellbeing (Senior Phase), Larbert High School; Jamie Swinney, Head of Sport, Tryst Community Sports Club.

E29. APOLOGIES

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor Nicol and Marnie McKay.

E30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

The Convener varied the order of business from that detailed in the agenda for the meeting. The following items have been recorded in the order that they were taken at the meeting.

E31. MINUTE

There was submitted (circulated) and **APPROVED** Minute of Meeting of the Education Committee held on 30 October 2012.

E32. INSPECTION BY HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION OF FALKIRK HIGH SCHOOL

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services (a) advising that HM Inspectorate of Education had undertaken an inspection of Falkirk High School in October 2012; (b) enclosing, as an appendix to the Report, a copy of the inspection report; (c) intimating that the inspection had highlighted key strengths and three areas for improvement, and (d) advising that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education would make no further visits to the school in connection with this inspection.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the improvements in the school
- the importance of pace and challenge for pupils
- the programme of cultural and sporting activities available at the school

AGREED to commend the headteacher, Mr Richard Anderson, and his staff for this report.

E33. LARBERT HIGH SCHOOL – PRESENTATION

The Convener welcomed Susan Orr, Jo Latimer and Jamie Swinney from Larbert High School who were in attendance to speak about their success in winning the School Sport Award at the Scottish Sports Awards held on 6 December 2012. The Committee then watched a short video presentation.

The Convener, on behalf of the Committee, passed on congratulations to the pupils and staff of Larbert High School for their success.

E34. 'IMPROVING QUALITY – RAISING ACHIEVEMENT' – A STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT FOR FALKIRK COUNCIL EDUCATION SERVICES – 2011/12

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013 by the Director of Education Services attaching as an Appendix a draft of the proposed standards and quality report for session 2011/12 for consideration.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the improvement in the number of young people now moving on to a positive destination after school
- the success of the Learning to Achieve Awards
- how the success of the literary provision is measured
- the plans for providing an update on the Gaelic Strategy
- how teachers are coping with the demands of the changing curriculum and exams
- the success of St Bernadette's Primary School

- the impact of the HMI Report in 2001 and the resulting positive change to education services in the Council area
- the important role of schools in the community

NOTED the Education Services Standards and Quality Report for session 2011/12.

AGREED to approve the Quality Report for wider dissemination.

E35. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY – RESERVED PLACES

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services (a) advising of the legislative position regarding Reserved Places; (b) providing an overview of the current Admissions Policy, agreed at Education Committee in October 2012; (c) outlining and defining the methodology behind the assessment and calculation of Reserved Places, and (d) providing an early indication of the number of Reserved Places that will be used for the 2013/14 academic session.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the importance of forward planning in relation to asset management in line with the trends in school roll
- the process for selection in terms of placing requests
- the number of placing request appeals submitted and the number which proceed
- capacity concerns at Kinnauld Primary
- issues with catchment areas, particularly when there are a number of catchment areas within a single community and the plans to address such anomalies

AGREED:-

- (1) to endorse the methodology behind the calculation and assessment of Reserved Places for each primary and secondary school;
- (2) that Reserved Places will continue to be re-assessed on an annual basis as currently stated in the Admissions Policy using the criteria outlined in this report, and
- (3) that the Reserved Places List for all schools will be published annually in the Falkirk Council Information Bulletin prior to the start of any new academic year.

E36. CLASS CONTACT TIME IN P1/2

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services (a) outlining the current class contact time provided in Falkirk primary schools for P1/2 stages, and (b) proposing a strategy for developing a consistent allocation of teaching time for all P1/2 pupils across primary schools in Falkirk.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the plans to use the extra resources flexibly
- the possibility for extra congestion at the school gates with all children leaving at the same time

AGREED:-

- (1) to endorse the proposal to deliver an entitlement to 25 hours class contact per week for all primary aged pupils, and
- (2) to refer the proposal to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

E37. INTRODUCTION OF A 33 PERIOD WEEK ACROSS ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services (a) highlighting the benefits of an alternative timetabling model of 33 periods per week; (b) recommending the adoption of such a model for all secondary schools in Falkirk, and (c) seeking permission to consult parents, pupils, teachers and teachers' trade unions on the implementation of this new model.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the flexibility of the consultation
- the impact of the changes on transport and on teachers
- the extra periods offering a more flexible approach
- concern over the lack of a formal registration period in the proposals
- the importance of consulting at individual school level

AGREED:-

- (1) to implement a timetabling model based on a 33 period week for all Falkirk secondary schools from August 2014 which can give rise to 27.5 hours schooling for pupils and 22.5 hours contact time for teaching staff;
- (2) to consult parents, pupils, teachers, Forth Valley College and teachers' trade unions on the detail of the implementation, and
- (3) to submit a further report to Education Committee on the results of the consultation with recommendations for future action.

Margaret Coutts left the meeting during discussion of the foregoing item of business.

E38. NURTURE CLASSES UPDATE

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services (a) providing an update on the progress made in setting up nurture classes, and (b) outlining the development of nurturing approaches in the establishments agreed as part of the pilot basis during the academic year 2012/13.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the importance of getting information from the children involved in the programme
- nurture being key to early intervention
- the success of the pilot programme

AGREED:-

- (1) to endorse the contents of the Report, and
- (2) that the Director of Education Services provide regular updates on the ongoing impact and evaluation of the nurture approach.

E39. MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 21 January 2013, by the Director of Education Services providing an update on the historical role and costs associated with the engagement of Foreign Language Assistants in secondary schools.

Discussion took place on the following:-

- the impact of developments in ICT on the teaching of modern languages
- the benefits of social contact and the person centred approach to teaching
- the commitment to modern languages in schools

Councillor Nimmo, seconded by Provost Reid moved approval of the recommendations as follows:-

- (i) to endorse the increasing use of ICT in modern foreign language departments to promote confidence in speaking and using the language, and
- (ii) to seek annual updated on the outcomes in secondary schools from participation in the ERASMUS and COMENIUS programmes.

Councillor Hughes, seconded by Councillor Alexander, having heard advice from the Deputy Chief Governance Officer in relation to a proposed amendment, moved the following in addition to the motion:-

- (iii) further, endorses the reinstatement of a Modern Language Assistants Programme at the cost of £64,000 per annum, and
- (iv) to refer the recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

On a vote being taken, 8 Members voted for the motion and 5 for the amendment.

Accordingly, **AGREED:-**

- (1) to endorse the increasing use of ICT in modern foreign language departments to promote confidence in speaking and using the language, and
- (2) to seek annual updated on the outcomes in secondary schools from participation in the ERASMUS and COMENIUS programmes.