

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 11 February 2016 at 1.00 pm.

PRESENT: Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams	Sir Gerry Loughran
Ms A Andrews	Mrs D McDonald
Mrs M Culbert	Dr A McMorrان
Dr M Dynan	Ms S O'Connor
Mr M Gray-Sloan	Miss R Rainey
Sr C Hegarty	Ms N Toman

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr B Mulholland, Ms L Gardiner, Mr R Gilbert, Ms S McCartan, Mr M McConkey, Ms K Scott and Ms L McCall.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Fr T Bartlett, Mr D Cargo, Dr I McMorris and Mr R Pollock.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 were agreed on the proposal of Miss Rainey and seconded by Sr Hegarty.

4. MATTER ARISING

RESTRUCTURING THE MUSIC SERVICE – INTERIM PROPOSAL (7.1)

A Member referred to the recruitment and selection process that would be initiated as part of the interim arrangements for the Music Service. She received clarification that the establishment of an interim regionalised management structure would be more streamlined and cost effective. The arrangements would involve a trawl of existing staff; the job descriptions for the posts of Head and Deputy Head of Service had been drafted and had undergone job evaluation.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 COMMITTEE MEETING - START TIME

The Committee agreed that the start time of the Committee should remain at 1.00 pm.

5.2 STRULE SHARED EDUCATION CAMPUS, OMAGH - MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (9)

The Chair declared an interest as he served on the Strule Main Campus Phase 2 Project Board and was a member of the Board of Governors of Omagh Academy.

Mr Mulholland reported that DE had advised that Development Proposals would not be required in respect of the Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC) Programme. The SSEC Directorate had been working with the school managing authorities on the arrangements for ownership, governance and management of the Campus and the agreed arrangements were set out formally in the draft Memorandum of Agreement.

Mr Mulholland stated that the EA was currently consulting with the three controlled schools on the draft Memorandum of Agreement as well as with the Controlled Schools' Support Council. To date EA officers had met to consult with representatives of two of the three controlled schools and a number of concerns had been raised by the school representatives. He advised that EA officers would be meeting representatives of the third controlled school that evening. The Trustees of the other three schools involved in the Programme were also engaging in consultation meetings. He advised that legal advice would be sought on the concerns and issues raised by the consultees and amendments would be made, where necessary, to the draft Memorandum of Agreement. These amendments would subsequently be shared with the six schools within the Programme. He pointed out that DE had hoped that the process would be complete in its entirety by the end of March.

Members received clarification that a final draft of the Memorandum of Agreement would be presented to the Committee at its March meeting for final consideration.

6. EQUALITY COMMISSION REPORT 'KEY INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION': PRESENTATION

Mrs Gardiner and Mrs Scott gave a presentation** on the key inequalities identified in the Equality Commission's 'Draft Statement on Key Inequalities in Education' (October 2015) and provided examples of the work of the School Development Service which sought to address those inequalities. The inequalities raised by the Equality Commission had related to bullying; educational attainment figures of males compared to females; the uptake by females within STEM subject areas; levels of attainment of Protestant pupils compared to Catholic pupils at GCSE and A Level; the underachievement and lack of progression of working class Protestants particularly males; the attainment levels of Roma children and children from the Traveller community; and attainment levels of pupils with SEN or a disability. One of the biggest challenges had related to addressing the persistently low GCSE outcomes for males, especially those attending non-grammar controlled schools and entitled to FSM.

Mrs Gardiner drew attention to the legacy of funding previously made available to support implementation of the CRED (Community Relations, Equality and Diversity) Policy (DE, 2011) and outlined examples of DE Earmarked Initiatives in recent years which had contributed to addressing inequalities. These included the Extended Schools' Programme, the DSC Signature Projects for Literacy and Numeracy and Shared Education, the STEM CIP and STEM CEIAG Programmes and the work of the Inclusion and Diversity Service and the Traveller Education Support Service. Members praised the work and outcomes of the Extended Schools' Programme and the DSC Signature Projects and expressed disappointment that funding had ceased the previous year to support the Literature and Numeracy Signature Project. It was

noted that an evaluation report had now been produced for this project which would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting. It was also noted that the ETI was currently completing an external evaluation of the project.

As a result of DE's 'Every School A Good School' Policy (DE, 2009) the CASS teams of the former ELBs had devised strategies to focus supports on targeted schools; these strategies were explained within the context of School Improvement Priorities. Members paid tribute to the successes of the initiatives entitled 'Achieving Belfast' and 'Achieving Derry – Bright Futures'. Mrs Gardiner referred to the investment in the past two years in the Greater West Belfast project and to examples of projects in recent years which had focused on improving the attainment of males.

Ms Toman left the meeting temporarily at 2.00 and re-entered at 2.02 pm.

Members noted statistical data on pupils' examination performances at GCSE and A Level, by gender and by management type. It was pointed out that improvements were being made in gaps concerning FSM, gender and in non-grammar to grammar. Mrs Scott provided recent school improvement data which was not included in the Equality Commission's report. This data indicated improvements in performance in a number of the targeted areas of inequality.

Members praised the efforts of schools and the School Development Service to raise standards and tackle underachievement. They highlighted the importance of tailoring intervention strategies to suit a school's particular needs, of having a framework of collective data and in sharing areas of good practice with the overall school community. They expressed disappointment that DE Earmarked funding should cease for initiatives which proved to be highly successful within schools.

A Member commented that the statistical data was purely examination performance based and did not take account of value added to individual pupils within a school community.

A Member considered that educational research in NI was under resourced. She noted that although there was emphasis in the presentation of evidence relating to gender, more research should be carried out on the relationship between poverty / areas of social deprivation and educational attainment. In addition, she considered that previous initiatives had not been universally applied across NI and that universities did not work closely enough with schools to provide targeted supports. Reference was made to the work of the Extended Schools' Programme to assist in improving opportunities for young people, particularly from deprived areas. It was also pointed out that each CASS team within the former ELBs had taken forward different initiatives to meet identified need within their own local context; however, the School Development Service was now operating as a single service and was now in the position to progress initiatives consistently throughout the Region.

Rev Adams entered the meeting at 2.15 pm.

A Member queried the supports provided to assist with bullying in schools. It was pointed out that responsibility for this area fell within the remit of the Children and Young People's Services department.

A Member welcomed the improvement in trends as identified in the statistics. However, she pointed out that some pupils still left schools with educational attainments below DE's threshold targets. It was therefore important to dispense with strategies which did not prove successful

and direct resources towards strategies that best suited a school community. She referred to progression of pupils and linkages with further education.

Mrs Andrews left the meeting at 2.22 pm and re-entered at 2.24 pm.

A Member queried the role of the Committee in driving forward educational improvements. Mr Mulholland said that the Committee would oversee the School Development Service's Business Plan which would set out the Service's priorities and strategic direction. The Plan would be influenced by the overall budget for the Service, specific DE priorities and Earmarked allocations and the work required as a result of the ETI inspection process. The Plan would also interlink with the Business Plan for the Children and Young People's Services department.

The Chair of the Board said that senior DE officials had invited to EA to engage with them on matters of educational policy. The Committee could therefore raise strategic issues with DE in order to discuss and influence policy.

It was agreed that a presentation on Early Years' education would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

7. SHARED EDUCATION ISSUES

7.1 ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, LIMAVADY AND LIMAVADY HIGH SCHOOL UNITY BRIDGE – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Mr Mulholland said that arrangements were being progressed for St Mary's High School, Limavady and Limavady High School to share a sixth form centre and a STEM centre through the construction of a 'unity bridge'. Funding had been provided by the Big Lottery to the project and the EA was being asked to provide a portion of land to construct the bridge between the two schools and to sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding.

On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Dr McMorran, the Committee agreed to recommend that the EA would become a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding and would provide the requisite portion of land to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council as part of an executed Legal Agreement / Easement in order to construct a bridge between the sites of Limavady High School and St Mary's High School, Limavady.

7.2 SHARED EDUCATION INITIATIVES – PEACE IV FUNDING

Mr Mulholland reported that, in line with DE and DES agreement, the EA and LEARGAS would work together to prepare a bid under the Peace IV programme. He said that the EA had established a team of officers in order to work with LEARGAS on projects.

8. AREA PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

For Publication

8.1 Development Proposal No 448 – Forth River Primary School Proposal to reduce the enrolment number from 232 to 210 in line with the school's admission number of 30 from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr M McConkey outlined the proposal* (E/2/16/8.1), drawing attention to the consultation which had taken place and the favourable comments received. Reference was made to the number of unfilled places available in the locality.

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend the publication of the Development Proposal.

8.2 Development Proposal No 449 – Gaelscoil Éanna
Proposal to establish a statutory Irish Medium Nursery Unit (Naiscoil Éanna) to provide 26 full time places with effect from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter

The Committee noted the proposal* (E/2/16/8.2) which would be published during the week beginning 15 February 2016.

On the proposal of Mrs Culbert, seconded by Mr Gray-Sloan, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the draft Response as set out at Appendix C*.

Clarification was sought on the policy for provision of full time versus part time nursery places. It was pointed out that the DE document ‘Learning to Learn’ included a framework for nursery provision. Mr McConkey said that he understood that nursery places already established as full time by DE would receive favourable consideration by DE to remain as full time places.

8.3 Development Proposal Nos 450 & 451 - Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí
DP 450 Proposal to discontinue Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí as a Grant Maintained Irish Medium Primary School with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter
DP 451 Proposal to establish a new Controlled Irish Medium Primary School to be known as Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí with effect from 1 September 2016

Mr Gilbert outlined the proposals* (E/2/16/8.3) which were dependent upon each other to bring about the transformation in the school’s status from a Grant Maintained Irish Medium primary school to a Controlled Irish Medium primary school.

Members discussed the reasons for the proposed transformation in status and the supports that would be in place to the new school from the EA and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

The proposal would be published during the week beginning 15 February 2016.

On the proposal of Ms O’Connor, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the draft Response as set out at Appendix C*.

8.4 Development Proposal No 454 - Gaelscoil na Daróige
Proposal to establish a statutory part time (26 pupil) Irish Medium nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter

The Committee noted that the pre-school provision was currently provided by Naiscoil na Daróige, a voluntary provision which shared a site with Gaelscoil na Daróige.

Ms McCartan outlined the proposal* (E/2/16/8.4) which sought to effect the transformation of the pre-school provision from voluntary to statutory.

The Committee noted the responses received to the pre-consultation.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Dr McMorran, the Committee endorsed the publication of the Development Proposal. It was agreed that the Members’ report section in this Development Proposal would be presented at the March meeting of the Committee.

Development Proposal Outcome

8.5 Enniskillen Royal Grammar School

Mr Mulholland reported that the judicial review, which had concluded the previous week, had found in favour of the Minister's decision to close Portora Royal School and Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen and to open a new Voluntary Grammar School. He said that an interim Board of Governors had been established for the new voluntary grammar co-educational school to be known as Enniskillen Royal Grammar School. The interim Board of Governors had commenced the process of recruiting a principal and a decision had been taken on the new school uniform.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 10 March 2016.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE