

Parent Council Chair Meetings

Monday 8th June 2015 in Ellon Academy & Thursday 25th June 2015 in Banchory Academy

Date: Monday 15th June 2015

Venue: Ellon Academy

Chairperson: Maria Walker

Other Authority representatives attending: Andrew Griffiths, Vincent Docherty, Tim McKay, Shona Sellers, Emma-Jane Whitehead, Christine McLennan, Maureen Hall.

Helen Jackson, Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland

Notes taken by Maureen Hall

Welcome and Introduction

Maria extended a warm welcome to all and began the meeting by outlining the current ongoing Children's Services Inspection and how the Council works together with local services to improve outcomes for our children. Helen Jackson was welcomed to the meeting.

Maria invited all in attendance to introduce themselves and the PC represented or Authority position held.

Maureen Hall, Pupil Support Authority Coordinator, will support the position of Authority Parent Involvement Officer at this time. An outline of current arrangements were clarified regarding Parent Council contact details and arrangements for PC to access funding allocations. Maureen will arrange to make contact with Parent Councils.

Items raised by Parent Council

Update on staffing

There continues to be significant numbers of vacancies and this is now being experienced across many authorities. Aberdeenshire Authority is pleased to report that we have a good number of probationers allocated for 2015-16, but still have numbers of vacancies and expect staffing to continue to be a difficulty.

Efforts have been made to fill these, currently looking at how we can attract teachers to this area. Working with HR and Housing, including private landlords, to build packages for potential staff. This can include refurbishment of current available council properties in rural areas, thus creating suitable accommodation in the rural areas that are 'difficult to fill' vacancies. During the recruitment process we are consulting with applicants about the potential issues that they might face.

There are 19 Aberdeenshire Council DLITE Primary Teachers due to join the teaching staff in August. DLITE is Aberdeenshire's own scheme where Council graduates are supported to complete an 18 month part time training programme with Aberdeen University to gain the necessary primary teaching qualifications.

In response to questions raised it was confirmed that there is a process where the authority reports to the Scottish Government on staffing issues including those regarding recruitment difficulties. During a recent visit by Angela Constance, MSP, current difficulties due to the rural nature of the authority were highlighted along with the high cost of living in this area.

Craig Clement, Head of Resources and Performance, sits on a national body that overviews teacher numbers and allocations.

Authority will again seek appointments from Ireland and support any issues that may exist for individuals whether accommodation or training requirements regarding curricular CfE matters.

Authority is working with agencies who could help access those teachers who trained in Scotland and took up positions abroad, Dubai etc.

National Parent Forum for Scotland

Bob Jones, Aberdeenshire's representative on NPFS, introduced himself to the meeting and outlined the support that NPFS could offer to parents and Parent Councils with the aim of providing a positive contribution of parental voice for our Children's Service.

He hopes to set up a communication structure based on use of Facebook/Twitter that will support communication of ideas for Chairs of Aberdeenshire Parent Councils.

Maureen Hall will arrange for PC Chairs to receive details of how they can contact Bob.

Update on Visiting Specialists

Andrew Griffiths outlined developments in the Visiting Specialists framework. It was explained that visiting specialist vacancies are being filled with primary teaching posts, providing greater staff stability for Head Teachers. There have been difficulties in recruitment of VS, with particular areas such as music.

Feedback on Pupil Voice Forum

Emma-Jane Whitehead and Christine McLennan provided information on Aberdeenshire's Pupil Forum, this included the viewing of a DVD 'Let your voice be heard'.

It was explained that the PVF is a pupil led structure and ideas were being identified by the pupils themselves. The staff were there to facilitate the structure. It currently involves secondary pupils however there is a plan in place to include primary pupil involvement.

Senior pupils from Ellon Academy replied to questions about their experience of being the first pupils to have gone through the new CfE Curriculum framework. This included a discussion about the progression from Nat 5 to Higher and their experience. They also spoke positively about the flexibility of curricular experiences, in particularly the wider achievement opportunities that are available.

Curriculum Development Overview

Andrew Griffiths explained the current focus of curriculum developments existing in Primary and Secondary. He regularly attends meetings that include SQA and feedback is provided on teacher/pupil experiences and schools are currently addressing issues regarding this.

A particular focus on the development of the Primary curriculum will continue into next session. This will ensure all pupils achieve the necessary development and skills. The Secondary focus will continue to support improvements in attainment and the effectiveness in our delivery of Literacy, Numeracy and Health & Well Being. Developing Scotland's Young Workforce is also a key development area.

Additional Support Needs

Vincent Docherty outlined the development of Aberdeenshire provision to ensure that we can meet Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) legislation. The provision will ensure that there is equity of provision across Aberdeenshire for all of our children and will be supported by a model of Enhanced Provision, arranged in the identified nine areas of local support. There will continue to be 4 Special Schools in Aberdeenshire.

Budget Update

Maria explained that there are ongoing discussions, now with the new Political Administration which was Aberdeenshire Council. Plans could involve efficiencies, change in management models, and the delivery of Services. Maria confirmed that she would endeavour to include parent discussion at the appropriate time.

Helen Jackson, Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland

Aberdeenshire staff left the meeting to allow Helen to hold discussions with Parent Council Chairs.

Maria thanked everyone for attending and the meeting concluded at 9.00pm

Date: Thursday 25th June 2015

Venue: Banchory Academy

Chairperson: Maria Walker

Other Authority representatives attending: Andrew Griffiths, Vincent Docherty, Craig Clement, Neil Morrison, Louise Moir, Christine McLennan, Maureen Hall.

Notes taken by Maureen Hall

Update on Joint Inspection of Aberdeenshire Children's Services

Maria provided an outline regarding initial available feedback. It is confirmed that Aberdeenshire children are safe and we are providing good provision. There will be action points to respond to. The inspection process has been a very useful opportunity for us as process being very helpful. It has allowed the identification of what is required to establish improvements. Comprehensive feedback will be provided when available.

Budget Update

Craig provided information on budget details but at present there are no detailed plans agreed. Moving forward we will have to make cuts but seek to minimise any impact for our schools and Children's Services. At this stage, for Education there are no details. Teacher numbers are determined and monitored by Scottish Government. In Aberdeenshire we are experiencing problems in attracting school to our area, similar to Aberdeen City and Moray. A range of promotional strategies have been pursued – recruitment video, advertising approaches, relocation packages. We have engaged in robust discussions with Scottish Government regarding numbers of probationer teachers and training opportunities in North East. Other efforts have included collaboration with agencies and implementation of our own training structure - DLITE.

Curriculum Developments Update

Andrew Griffiths outlined key features of our curriculum framework. Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 includes Nursery, Primary, Secondary and beyond, with this year's fifth year being the first cohort of pupils taking the new S5 SQA CfE Higher exams. Aberdeenshire has implemented planned curriculum courses based on SQA advice. Standardised Assessments (CEM) are used in primary and early secondary to support tracking of pupil progress. Raising Attainment for our pupils is based on a breadth of outcomes and experiences and includes learning in the classroom, wider achievement and holistic learning.

We use Scottish Government INSIGHT measures to support tracking and monitoring of Aberdeenshire practice and success.

Named Person legislation

Andrew Griffiths provided an overview on authority preparations for the implementation of this legislation. Through the implementation of the Children & Young Persons Act a Named Person service is provided for every child. Prior to the child attending school the Named Person will be a Health Visitor, thereafter at school this role will be the responsibility of the Primary School Head Teacher or

Depute Head Teacher. In Secondary the Depute Head Teacher or Principal Teacher Guidance. Legislation comes into effect in August 2016, currently there is a consultation exercise in place.