

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Educational Services Committee: 4 December 2013

Subject: Validated Self-Evaluation - Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report updates Members about the work of the themed groups contributing to the Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) of Educational Services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) notes the content of this report; and
 - (b) receives a further up-date as to progress at the March 2014 meeting of the Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 Members were informed of the forthcoming VSE at the Committee meeting of May 2013.
- 3.2 The VSE considers the work of Educational services in relation to improvements in performance, impact on learners and the overall capacity for improvement. This evidence is considered against the Single Outcome Agreement, the Council's priorities and the priorities of Educational Services.

4. Main Issues

Thematic Groups

- 4.1 Educational Services identified 4 key areas of work to be explored through the VSE:-
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| Theme 1 | Raising Attainment and Achievement |
| Theme 2 | Transitions with particular reference to P7/S1 |
| Theme 3 | Health and Wellbeing within Curriculum for Excellence with particular reference to early stages |
| Theme 4 | Joint working between Community Learning and Development and Education in the Vale of Leven |

- 4.2 Each of the themed groups has been gathering information through research, establishment visits and interviews with staff, pupils and parents to examine pertinent elements of each theme.
- 4.3 The information to date is providing a rich source of evidence for the Service. This includes very good work to be celebrated and shared as well as shining the light on areas for improvement.
- 4.4 The areas where we must make improvement will be incorporated into an action plan.

Updates

- 4.5 The following up-dates from the themed groups provide an indication of some of the work that has been taking place across the Service.

Raising Attainment and Achievement Group

- 4.6 The key focus of the group is exploring the impact of developing data rich establishments, improving learning and teaching through self evaluation practices and cultivating partnership working with parents on raising attainment and achievement.
 - 4.6.1 Early implementation of the evaluation tools that we have developed suggests that the department has a clear strategic focus and that this has resulted in strong practice across establishments. Specifically, the Leadership for Learning Programme and the Raising Attainment teachers have impacted directly on improved scrutiny of data and focused action planning emerging from this. Direct impact is evident in our improved SQA results this session.
 - 4.6.2 Areas for further improvement are rooted in communication including from the centre to establishments, between establishments and within establishments. During November and December 2013, the group will embark on a significant programme of evaluation work across a number of clusters which will enable us to move with confidence to a summative statement regarding these aspects of the department's work.

Transitions Group

- 4.7 A local authority transitions policy was produced in 2011. Implementation of this policy is varied and requires review in light of the most recent national advice. There are well established transition projects in all clusters with examples of emerging very good practice in some subject areas:
 - 4.7.1 Dumbarton Academy Cluster

A cohesive approach to transition in maths and numeracy has made a positive impact on meeting learner need. Collaboration on curricular content at P7 into S1 has enabled support matched to the level of need for groups and individuals.

There has been a reduction in the number of children moved between groups at the start of S 1 due to shared approaches to curriculum planning and assessment (sharing standards). Review of planning for progression and curricular content across the cluster has enabled dialogue about levels of expectation for attainment in P7. Evidence of a disparity in the levels of attainment across the feeder primaries at P7 indicates that this is an issue which requires to be addressed. The secondary staff report adaptation in the style of learning and teaching approaches used to engage learners. This cluster should now undertake further research on the impact of this on attainment in S1 /S2. Comparative data from before the start of this enhanced model is not available for study.

4.7.2 St Peter the Apostle Cluster

Joint work on transition in literacy P7/S1 has engaged staff in professional dialogue about second and third level outcomes plus assessment data required to make professional judgements .An assessment tool based on WDC's writing assessment criteria was adapted to match with CFE experiences and outcomes. Previous engagement of secondary staff working in the primary sector is reported to have raised staff expectation of what could be achieved in S1. Staff development sessions have been provided on critical essay writing to support a consistency of approach to learner engagement. Not all primaries engaged in this.

4.7.3 As our attainment is below the national average it would be of value to review in more detail if the curricular content delivered across stages is meeting the needs of our learners 42% of whom can be described as poor. Evidence indicates a 20 % increase in the number of young people on staged intervention between P7 and S2. Evaluation of reasons for this requires further research. The local authority raising attainment strategy aims to address this.

Data on the social and emotional needs of learners is used well. However, this is not replicated in planning curricular content in the majority of subjects. There is evidence of differentiation in the content of material delivered in some subjects but this is not consistently applied. Guidance and direction is required to support a rigorous model for evaluating the impact on attainment and achievement. Improvement is required in planning for progression and continuity as the majority of learners are presented with a third level programme of learning in S1.

The majority of young people are positive about their experience of transition and report that this helps prepare for the transition to secondary. The majority of parents are satisfied with arrangements for transition although this is not as positive as the feedback from our young people. This is also evidence in the feedback from parents about the transition from nursery to primary. There are very positive parental evaluations of the transition from mainstream to specialist provision.

The authority has been successful in delivering the national expectation for learner profiling. There has been a clear commitment to supporting the delivery of this across the authority. All schools have supported our young people to produce P7 and S3 profiles. Further improvement to support the use of these for personalising the curriculum particularly at P7/S1 is necessary. There have been reviews of profiling in clusters and plans for improving the impact of these are being developed. This review links with plans to review our reporting processes to parents. Evidence shows that the P7 profile has had no impact on providing continuity and progression in learning for our young people. This can be attributed to: competing priorities, professional opinion and a lack of confidence of profiling (staff and pupils).

4.7.4 Capacity for improvement

Our capacity for improvement is strong. A re-structure of the management service in education will enable implementation of key strategic priorities for the national CfE agenda. This innovative development for our education service provides a strong platform for continued improvement in transitions as an increased expectation is being set by the local authority.

Transitions policy is evidenced in the education service plan and evaluation of the impact of policy implementation and identification of next steps for development is being facilitated by the VSE process. The new service manager with responsibility for curriculum is working in partnership with the evaluation team to produce an action plan for improving provision for delivery of The Entitlements and BGE. Cohesive planning for delivery of these encompass corporate priorities for raising attainment and lifelong learning.

The new service managers are tasked with developing robust quality improvement models which integrate the work of education sectors in 3-18 learning communities. This will support successful implementation of transitions strategy.

There is evidence of commitment in each cluster to the principle of transitions. Staff are conversant with the rationale of CfE and recognise the professional responsibility to engage in the strategy for improvement.

Health and Wellbeing Group

- 4.8** The Health and Well Being Group have identified that there are many strategies in place which help to facilitate West Dunbartonshire Council's commitment to deliver a high quality service to its children and young people by working in partnership with parents and communities. A very positive strategy is the development of a highly skilled pre 5 workforce through the training for all staff in our Early Years' establishments in the Solihull Approach.

The Solihull Approach promotes emotional health and well-being in children and families. The model supports practitioners to work with children and families whilst supporting parents to understand their child.

The socioeconomic profile of WDC brings with it many challenges for families and educators as there is a direct link between the experiences of early childhood and subsequent adulthood. What happens in the very earliest years of life of our children makes the biggest difference. The Solihull Approach is an early intervention strategy which attempts to remove barriers to learning - which by its very nature improves the life chances of our young people. The Solihull Approach is an evidence based model with a strong theoretical foundation which has been taken forward within WDC by the Educational Psychology Service. The Educational Psychology service has trained all Pre 5 practitioners and there is now strong evidence to show positive impact.

In some primary schools within WDC there has been the development of Nurture Groups. A nurture group is a small group of 6 to 10 children which is usually based in a mainstream educational setting and staffed by two supportive adults. Nurture groups offer a short term, focussed intervention strategy which addresses barriers to learning arising from social / emotional and or behavioural difficulties, in an inclusive, supportive manner. Many of our schools face daily challenges and this strategy, like the Solihull Approach, breaks the barriers to learning and improves life chances. In some schools this has not been sustained. Similarly, many of our schools could benefit from this strategy being implemented cannot because of budgetary constraints. This would require financial investment.

Both of these strategies reflect the priorities of the Service Plan - one of which is to develop the capacity of all educators to support young people in raising their attainment and achievement.

Vale of Leven Joint Evaluation Group – CLD/Education

4.9 Most positive progress to date has been the beginning of joint pieces of work embedding a new joint planning and self evaluation model from the start and based on:

- * Joint needs assessment
- * Identification of priorities from the VOLA/CLD Improvement Plans
- * Evaluation of previous learning programmes and impact on attainment and achievement
- * Self Evaluation exercise undertaken in relation to QI 8.1 Partnership Working and QI 5.10 Improving Services

The Self Evaluation exercise recently undertaken also identified some aspects for improvement including:

- * Although wider partners are involved in delivering in VOLA and within the Learning Community, there is a need to improve partnership working together to jointly plan and self evaluate to secure positive outcomes for young people.

- * Young people are gaining skills in relation to CfE and accreditation in the wider community which should be recognised in some way e.g. perhaps through e portfolios

4.10 A meeting will take place on week beginning 25 November 2013 with the lead inspector for the VSE. This will be attended by the Chief Executive and the VSE project board.

5. People Implications

5.1 This report has no implications for personnel.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 This report has no financial implications.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 Failure to engage in robust and challenging self-evaluation would result in the quality of our service impacting negatively on the people we serve.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out and found that the VSE process will support our duty to secure improvement within the terms of Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000

9. Consultation

9.1 Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report reflects the Council's aspiration to improve life chances for children and young people which is one of the strategic priorities for 2012 – 2017

Terry Lanagan
Executive Director

Person to Contact: Laura Mason, Head of Service, Department of Educational Services, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU
Telephone No. 01389 737304
E-mail: laura.mason@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: EIA Screening

Wards Affected: All Wards