

## **West Dunbartonshire Council**

### **Report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services**

**Children's Services Committee: 17 May 2006**

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**Subject: Presentation by Dr Elizabeth Morris and Mary Berrill, Inclusion Officer, on the Transforming Relationships Programme for School Staff**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1** To provide Members of the Children's Services Committee with information on the Transforming Relationships programme currently being provided to staff in West Dunbartonshire schools.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1** Dr Elizabeth Morris is a Psychologist and Principal of the School of Emotional Literacy (SEL) which is a national training organisation specialising in the continuing professional development of teachers and support staff. The focus is on the development of emotional intelligence in children and young people. Dr Morris has been working alongside Mary Berrill, Inclusion Officer, to support the personal and professional development of staff in schools so that they in turn can provide vital support to children and young people.

#### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** Transforming relationships is a practical solution addressing real problems in schools and classrooms in terms of challenging behaviour and levels of attendance and achievement. While there are many strategies and initiatives in place already to address these issues through changes in the environment, additional support for targeted pupils and curriculum flexibility, this programme is unique in its focus on change in staff and their attitudes.
- 3.2** The programme specifically tackles ways to increase the capacity of staff to be empathic and optimistic to alleviate the daily stress and tension within schools. By finding ways to build trusting, positive relationships staff are able to form professionally powerful bonds with students. This has the potential to significantly increase the learning capacity of these young people.
- 3.3** In order for these relationships to be powerful and have impact however the staff require to feel and demonstrate key characteristics which have been identified by research conducted by SEL. The key characteristics which have most impact on relationships, and which are often not strongly represented in schools, are those of empathy and optimism. The Transforming Relationships programme is designed to enhance the levels of these characteristics in school staff.

**3.4** To date the following schools have been involved in the Transforming Relationships programme:

Levenvale Primary  
St. Stephen's Primary  
St. Kessog's Primary  
Whitecrook Primary  
Renton Primary  
Knoxland Primary  
St. Martin's Primary  
St. Andrew's High  
St. Columba's High  
Our Lady & St. Patrick's High  
Kilpatrick School

The group also includes a teacher from the Intensive Support and Monitoring Service. Group composition ensures a spread of staff representative of the different sectors of education within the authority area.

**3.5** There is an ongoing process of evaluation of the programme and feedback from staff has been consistently very favourable. The format of the 6 training days provided has ensured a balance between staff exploring their own personal development, and learning new skills and techniques to assist others acquire the social competencies needed to become creative teachers.

**3.6** When fully trained, the staff involved will assist schools in undertaking an emotional audit. This will involve volunteer staff being offered an 'emotional profile' and being given sensitive feedback on areas for development and those areas which will enhance their practice. There will also be the opportunity for the school to pursue whole school training in several key areas including Self-Esteem, Learnt Optimism, The Motivated School and The Developing Brain.

**4. Personnel Issues**

There are no personnel issues.

**5. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications.

**6. Conclusions**

**6.1** The presentation will aim to give members a flavour of this innovative staff support programme which is geared to have a positive impact on staff and pupils in schools across West Dunbartonshire.

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members of the Children's Services Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

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Bob Cook  
Director of Education & Cultural Services

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**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All Wards