

Item 4.1

Acting Executive Director of Communities and Families Update

Update for Parent Council Neighbourhood Groups – August 2016

Introduction

Welcome back - I hope you all enjoyed a pleasant summer and a well deserved break. The summer holidays are always a good opportunity for staff to recharge their batteries and gear up for the new session, with all the changes and fresh challenges that this brings.

We now have all of our PPP1 schools open again which is fantastic news. All 17 closed schools have reopened ahead of schedule, with the final two handed back to the Council on 11 August. 7,600 pupils were affected by the school closures as the Council put in place a huge logistical plan to provide alternative arrangements. More than 5,000 children were educated at over 70 different schools and education facilities during the three months up to the start of the summer holidays.

Once again, I must thank all the parents, pupils and staff involved - whether at a directly affected or receiving school, or one of our centres at Howdenhall and Goodtrees - for their patience, dedication and resilience over what was a long period of disruption. It was right and proper, but still inspiring, that at every turn, children came first. I know that many staff and children commented on the warm welcome they received from their host school and I hope this proves a basis for new and lasting partnerships and friendships.

The respected construction and procurement industry expert, John Cole CBE has been appointed to lead the independent inquiry into Edinburgh's school closures and this work has now started. It is anticipated the inquiry should be completed by the end of the year. The clear and thorough terms of reference set out exactly what the Council is aiming to achieve through this inquiry - we want to find out what went wrong with these schools and determine what lessons can be learned, not just here in Edinburgh, but across Scotland and the rest of the UK. I hope parents are reassured by the extensive knowledge and experience Mr Cole brings to this role.

Whilst working through this difficult period, our staff have also been involved in implementing the significant change of the Council's Transformation Programme. Children's Services and key areas of Schools and Lifelong Learning and Operational Support have completed significant transformation, and work is now underway in other major areas in Schools and Lifelong Learning and Libraries, which will see plans coming forward in the autumn.

I have highlighted some other impressive developments across our services in this update. I must say how impressed I have been with the level of performance that has been maintained across services, a real achievement given the turbulent time we have experienced. I believe we can now move forward positively and are well placed to meet the exciting tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

Exam Results Success

The SQA exam results show that 2016 has been another really positive year for Edinburgh students, with performance rising yet again. I am delighted that once again our pupils have exceeded expectations from previous years, with notable improvements in several key measures. A total of 39,884 resulted awards were certificated for 8,007 candidates in more than 80 subjects, ranging from Accounting to Urdu.

Some selected cases include a S5 pupil from Holyrood who achieved 7 As at Higher and St Thomas of Acquin's sisters at S6 and S4 who achieved 3 As and a B at Advanced Higher plus 8 As at National 5. Liberton S5 twins also achieved 5 As each at Higher, another fantastic achievement.

A particular strength is the attainment of pupils by the end of S5 and S6, where strong levels of attainment have either been maintained or improved at all stages.

Additional information:

Results by end of S4

5+ awards at level 5 or better – 43% (4 percentage points more than last year).

Results by end of S5*

1+ award at level 6 or better - 59% (1 percentage point more than the previous year; continues a five year improving trend and a 9 percentage point improvement since 2011).

3+ awards at level 6 or better - 37% (2 percentage points more than the previous year; continues a five year improving trend and an 8 percentage point improvement since 2011).

5+ awards at level 6 or better - 18% (1 percentage point more than the previous year, an improvement of 4 percentage points since 2011).

Results by end of S6*

1+ award at level 6 or better - 66% (3 percentage points more than the previous year and an 11 percentage point improvement since 2011).

3+ awards at level 6 or better - 46% (2 percentage points more than the previous year, a continuing improving trend and a 6 percentage point improvement since 2011).

5+ awards at level 6 or better - 32% (maintaining last year's good result and a 4 percentage point improvement since 2011).

1+ award at level 7 - 25% (3 percentage points more than last year and an improvement of 5 percentage points since 2011).

**based on the percentage of S4 pupil roll.*

It has been a real achievement to have not only sustained, but built on the successes from previous years, with year on year improvement since 2011. Congratulations go to all pupils who sat exams this year and praise also to parents and carers for their invaluable support. Thanks must also go to our dedicated staff who worked extremely hard to help students achieve these wonderful results.

Another key aim is to also make sure that all school leavers enter a positive destination of employment, training or further education. Initiatives such as the Edinburgh Guarantee are going a long way to making this a reality. With 92% of our young people achieving and sustaining a positive destination, this is a real success story and something we will be looking to build on in the future.

Leith Primary School

On 8 June, a team of P5, P6 and P7 children launched a high altitude weather balloon from the foot of Ben Nevis. All children were invited to join this STEM project, but eventually 17 were chosen. The launch was highly successful, with the children launching three cameras and a GPS tracker, along with various items of no scientific importance!

The balloon reached 28.5km above the earth surface, by which time the balloon had expanded to the size of a double-decker bus. Two cars with parents and children then headed for the landing site near Aberfoyle and after significant perseverance and interesting driving on forestry roads, the camera and parachute were recovered at 7.00pm on the same day close to a stand of very high trees. The footage captured by the camera is extraordinary, showing all stages of the flight and some spectacular images of Scotland from the edge of space.

The edited film and story was featured on Radio Forth and then went national on the main STV news and BBC website. The whole school community have shared in the excitement and learning involved in this project. The University of Edinburgh have also offered to help any future launches with undergraduates and some more complex data gathering equipment.

Well done to all those involved in this exciting project!

Young Consumers of the Year Competition

In my last update, I mentioned that a team of pupils from Boroughmuir High School had clinched the title of Scotland's Young Consumers of the Year 2016, and would be representing Scotland at the UK final in London. The national final took place over 9/10 June and the students from Boroughmuir competed against three other schools from across the UK. After a tough two-day final, I am delighted to advise that Boroughmuir prevailed against their rivals and have now been crowned UK champions!

For the first day of the competition, the students were invited on board a luxury charter on the River Thames and had to tackle three 30-minute challenges. There was then a final quiz on the Friday morning. The quiz comprised of eight rounds of

questions on a variety of topics - Boroughmuir won the quiz event by a margin of over 30 points to win the trophy, quite an achievement!.

Organised by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) and the Consumer Empowerment Alliance, the annual event is for schools and youth groups across the UK to test their consumer and financial knowledge.

In addition to claiming the coveted trophy, the Boroughmuir students won £1000 for their school and a £50 voucher each. Winning the competition is a prestigious achievement for the school and the end result of a lot of hard work from pupils and staff. Our congratulations go to Boroughmuir on their fabulous win.

Paolozzi Prize for Art

I was delighted to attend the Paolozzi Prize for Art Award Ceremony on 1 June at the National Gallery of Scotland. This is the annual award for art and design students in all Edinburgh high schools, a celebratory event run by the Council's Arts & Creative Learning team. Young people are nominated by their teachers for this prestigious award, and entered into four categories: Talent and Creativity; New Directions; Overcoming Barriers; and Spirit of Paolozzi.

The process allows some of our less confident students and those who may not put themselves forward to be nominated and acknowledged for their quality art work. All are invited to the award ceremony along with teachers, parents, carers, and friends. Certificates are presented and there are also inspiring talks and wonderful live music performed by some of our musicians. This year included a string quartet from the Royal High, two guitarists from Edinburgh Schools Guitar Ensemble and a duet from Edinburgh Schools Rock Ensemble.

The judging panel included renowned artist Richard de Marco and Christopher Breward, Principal of Edinburgh College of Art. The overall winner was a pupil from Forrester High School who made an animated film 'Bionic Bunny' as part of her Higher Media qualification.

Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Disability

We are making very encouraging progress towards the implementation of our strategic priority to strengthen our approach to disability equalities in schools. This includes a focus on learners with an ASD in particular.

A three year cycle of leadership development, whole school and targeted professional learning programmes on Autism has received a very positive response. Training programmes provided through a collaborative programme let through the ASL Service, Psychological Service and NHS partners have already commenced in a number of settings and the leadership programme will take place early in the new session.

Our commitment to improving the experiences and outcomes for learners with Autism reflects our existing priorities, our continuing self evaluation and learning from the outcomes of Tribunal Hearings where decisions by schools/ authorities have been successfully challenged in Disability Discrimination cases.

A particular area of concern arises around the exclusion of learners with a disability, where Tribunals are finding that schools/ authorities have not fulfilled their duties to anticipate, assess and plan support or reasonable adjustments for learner's disabilities.

We are currently reviewing our policy and procedures relating to exclusion and the support available to ensure that the likely implications of a learner's disability are anticipated and all reasonable adjustments are in place to prevent exclusions in such cases.

Moving to Learn

The peripatetic teachers have devised a programme to support gross and fine motor skill development of children 18 months to 6 years outlining the importance of these skills for future success in learning. This is an early intervention approach aiming to identify children requiring additional support. The guidance provides a range of strategies for staff to implement to ensure progression. This training is currently being rolled out with positive action schools across the city and will subsequently be available to other staff through Continuing Professional Development opportunities.

School Catchment Fraud

You may have seen the recent positive media coverage of the work undertaken which led to 24 families losing their school places for the 2016/17 session after being caught giving false statements to get their children into 'popular' city schools. The Council's Fraud Team carried out 1500 investigations, which included every potential S1 pupil at three of the most popular high schools – St James Gillespie's, Boroughmuir and St Thomas of Aquin's. The findings uncovered 13 catchment frauds at high schools and 11 at primaries. The school with the highest number of fraudulent cases was James Gillespie's High School with seven. The overall number of cases quadrupled from last year, when only six families were caught.

I realise this is an issue that concerns many parents and I hope this publicity helps to offer reassurance that the Council takes the matter very seriously and is working hard to manage the problem. We advise parents every year that we are actively looking into catchment fraud and if we believe there is a possibility that fraud is being committed, we will investigate and withdraw the school place if this is discovered to be the case.

Portobello High School

I am very pleased that the long-awaited new Portobello High School will open in the autumn, three months earlier than expected. The school was originally expected to open this summer, but water drainage issues had meant a delay until January 2017. However, close liaison over the last few months between the Council's project team,

contractors Balfour Beatty and Scottish Water means the problems can be fixed quicker than expected.

The new school will now open its doors to pupils on 26 October, after the mid-term break and will become the Council's largest secondary school with space for 1,400 pupils. It will provide state of the art teaching facilities and have both indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including a swimming pool and two all weather pitches. This will enable all curricular PE to be provided on site rather than having to transport pupils to other locations.

Edinburgh is a vibrant and rapidly expanding city and expected population pressures mean we are looking ahead, actively considering where we will need new capacity for 2020 and beyond. There is no doubt we have an exciting and challenging future ahead.

Alistair Gaw

**Acting Executive Director of Communities and Families
August 2016**