

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE : 23 MARCH 2004

NATIONAL PRIORITIES REPORT 2003

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Elected Members of the publication of the National Priorities Report 2003 for East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000) established an improvement framework for Scottish schools. Following the Act, National Priorities were established to improve outcomes for pupils. Authorities are now obliged to report on an annual basis on performance against Local Improvement Objectives and National Priorities.
- 2.2 In order to establish a framework within which improved outcomes for pupils can be demonstrated, the Scottish Executive published a National Priorities Baseline Report setting out the position of each authority in 2002. The section dealing with East Ayrshire was presented to the Education Committee on 4 February 2004.
- 2.3 The format used in the Scottish Executive report has been adopted as the basis of the report produced by East Ayrshire for 2003 which was submitted to the Executive at the end of January 2004. Overall, this shows steady progress towards the targets set for 2005. It should be noted that some 2003 data was not yet available at the time of reporting. In the light of performance to date, in response to changes in legislation and new funding streams to support, for example:
- the arts and culture;
 - sport and physical activity;
 - enterprise in education
- a revised set of local improvement objectives "Priority to Improvement 2004" has been published and distributed to all educational establishments. The detail of the new statement is contained in a separate report to Committee.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 As indicated above, the department is making overall steady progress in overtaking the targets set, in consultation with establishments, for 2005.

3.2 Key features of note are:

National Priority 1 Achievement and Attainment

- Attainment in primary school 5-14 National Tests shows a steady increase from 2000 to 2003 as follows:

reading	75.1% to 78%
writing	64.8% to 71.2%
mathematics	76.6% to 79.1%
- Attainment in secondary school 5-14 National Tests shows a steady increase from 2000 to 2003 as follows

reading	50.3% to 59.8%
writing	37.7% to 49.3%
mathematics	55.5% to 61.3%

This performance is equal to, or significantly better than that of comparator authorities and national performance
- Performance in National Qualifications in secondary schools shows a steady increase in all but one of the eight reporting categories

National Priority 2 Framework for Learning

- A comprehensive programme of Continuing Professional Development is available for all staff
- The authority offers leadership and management development for senior managers and is involved in the Columba 1400 leadership programme.
- Conferences are hosted with presenters of international reputation
- All staff are involved in the programme of Professional Review and Development
- Pupils are supported through staged intervention in their behaviour management
- Circle Time is widely used throughout the pre-school and primary sectors
- The Personal and Social Development programme in secondary schools has been revised and material provided by Guidance staff for use in classes.

National Priority 3 Inclusion and Equality

- The attainment and achievement of vulnerable children and children looked after and accommodated are monitored and tracked
- Learning Partnerships are moving towards better integrated services for children and young people
- The 'Closing the Gap' project has been piloted in four primary schools to much national acclaim
- East Ayrshire is only 1% point below the national average for pupils in the lowest 20% tariff based on exam performance
- The revised Special Educational Needs policy has been published and is now being implemented across the authority
- The authority has prepared and published an action plan setting out how it will improve access to school buildings and the formal and informal curriculum for people with disabilities
- Gaelic medium education provision now covers the pre-school, primary and secondary sectors

National Priority 4 Values and Citizenship

- Pupils in the authority's schools are involved in a wide range of activities which encourage them to work with others and which are designed to promote their personal and social development
- The authority has encouraged the formation of School Councils across all sectors and an authority student group meets with the Chair of the Education Committee and the Director of Educational and Social Services
- Twelve of the authority's schools have registered with the Eco Schools Scheme
- A series of citizenship conferences managed and presented by young people across all sectors are now a feature of student activities

National Priority 5 Learning for Life

- Physical education and sports development initiatives are being undertaken in all schools. There is a school sports co-ordinator in all secondaries
- Enterprise, innovation and creativity are supported by a dedicated unit and the policy "Creative Minds" is being implemented across the authority

3.3 Apart from directly benefiting the children and young people of East Ayrshire, a number of the projects identified in para. 3.2 are pioneering in nature. Of special note is the "Closing the Gap" initiative. This is a partnership with Glasgow University aimed at the early years of primary education, and seeking to learn from best practice. Its success has been recognised by teachers, headteachers, researchers and the national media. There have been a number of high profile articles, all extolling the intention and benefit of this pilot project.

3.4 Similarly the Columba 1400 leadership programme has been very well received. Headteachers attend an intensive course on Skye. This forces them to re-evaluate their own practice and values in a way that will provide positive reinforcement to colleagues and improve provision in schools. It is undertaken in partnership with the Hunter Foundation

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL/POLICY

There are no legal, financial or policy implications arising from this report.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to:

- i) note the position of East Ayrshire as reflected by National Priorities Report 2003.
- ii) receive further reports of progress in addressing National Priorities on an annual basis
- iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

KMcK/MR
03.03.04

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- i) National Priorities Baseline Report Education Committee 4 February 2004
- ii) National Priorities Report 2003 (available in Members' Lounge)
- iii) Priority to Improvement 2004 (available in Members' Lounge)

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service:
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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT