

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 22 MARCH 2005**  
**ATTENDANCE OF PRIMARY 1 PUPILS**

**Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To inform the Education Committee of the proposal that Primary 1 pupils commence full day attendance at school from early September rather than the current practice of mid-October.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Current practice is that Primary 1 pupils only attend for a half day of schooling from August until mid-October. This has been the traditional practice for a number of years. However, pupils now transferring into Primary School have had prior experience of education via early years provision. Thus, they are already familiar with educational establishments and structured learning.
- 2.2** A pilot project to investigate Primary 1 pupils attending for a full day from early September 2004 was run in a number of schools during 2004-05. All primary schools within the Loudoun Learning Partnerships, St Sophia's Primary and Mount Carmel Primary were involved. Approximately 240 pupils were involved.
- 2.3** Pupils entering Primary 1 in August 2004 had been affected to a greater, or lesser, degree by the Unison industrial action. For some pupils this meant they did not attend nursery for 10 weeks and, as a result, some pupils entering Primary 1 were less well prepared for school than in other years.

**3. AIMS OF THE PROJECT**

- 3.1** The aims of the pilot project were:
- To investigate the impact on Primary 1 pupils of commencing a full day's attendance from mid-September 2004.
  - To allow pupils and staff more time to learn/teach in a more relaxed atmosphere.
  - To extend the use of learning through play.
  - To tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils rather than to follow a strict balanced timetable.
  - To remove the emphasis on target setting in Primary1.

## **4. EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROJECT**

**4.1** The evaluation took account of the views of parents and staff as well as focusing on the impact on pupils.

**4.2** The key findings of the evaluation were as follows:

- More time has been spent on interactive language and mathematics teaching.
- Pupils have had more time to interact with each other.
- Pupils are more confident learners, are better motivated, and have less fear of failure.
- Where interactive teaching is used consistently, pupils have had no difficulty in completing formal tasks more quickly and more confidently.
- Pupils writing and number work have shown fewer reversals.
- Pupils appear to be enjoying school more.
- Primary 1 staff are less stressed and have indicated they are enjoying teaching more.
- Staff have had more time to get to know pupils and to work with them on an individual basis.
- Although some Primary 1 classes have pupils displaying challenging behaviour, teachers have continued to use a play-based approach and, in some cases, this has assisted in managing such behaviour.
- Some children were tired in the afternoon, although this was not seen as a problem in schools where play-based interactive learning was consistently used.
- Primary 1 teachers required, and benefited from, relevant professional development.

**4.3** Staff indicate that as more time has been spent on laying the foundation for learning formal writing, this will be of benefit to pupils. Most pupils in all schools seem to be on target, or ahead of target, in language and mathematics despite the fact no emphasis has been put on this.

In almost all schools it is now evident that this interactive, play-based approach to learning has been expanded beyond language and mathematics and is now being used effectively across all curricular areas. This has resulted in the development of skills such as sharing, consideration of others, and respect. Social skills have been enhanced through play and there is some evidence to show this approach has helped social inclusion.

**4.4** Parental views were sought via a questionnaire. 133 returns were received and the details of this questionnaire are attached in Appendix 1. The overall response was very positive and the results of the survey were collated and returned to parents via the schools.

**4.5** The results of the evaluation suggest that all Primary 1 pupils across the authority should commence full day attendance from early September (ie the beginning of the third week of term).

## **5. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT (CPD)**

**5.1** CPD was provided to staff involved in the pilot project. Staff undertook inter-school visits, a wide range of resources were produced and disseminated and direct support provided to staff. The Early Intervention Team and a Quality Improvement Officer also provided support.

Further support and CPD has been planned for the remainder of this school session. This would enable schools to be prepared for full implementation of these proposals in session 2005-06.

## **6. LEGAL/POLICY/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** Nil.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** It is recommended that members:

- (i) Approve the attendance of Primary 1 pupils for a full day from the beginning of the third week of the first term.
- (ii) Otherwise, note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/EO'N  
02/03/05

### **List of Background Papers**

Nil

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support (01563) 576126 or Grace Scott, Quality Improvement Officer (01563) 555650

**Implementation Officer: John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support**

## RESPONSE TO PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was provided to parents/carers of all pupils involved in the pilot project. It requested their views on a number of matters:

1. What was your reaction to your child being in school full day from August 2004?

Very Pleased – 35%  
Pleased – 28%  
Concerned – 30%  
Very Concerned – 7%

2. How do you feel now that your child had an early start to the full day in Primary 1?

Very Pleased – 64%  
Pleased – 32%  
Concerned – 3%  
Very Concerned – 1%

3. How well do you feel your child coped with the longer day?

Very Well – 74%  
Well – 21%  
Quite Well – 4%  
Not Well – 1%

4. How happy is your child at school now?

Very Happy – 73%  
Happy – 27%  
Not Very Happy – 0%  
Unhappy – 0%

5. Do you see your child making progress with language activities?

Yes – 95%  
No – 3%  
Don't Know – 2%

6. Do you see your child making progress in number activities?

Yes – 96%  
No – 2%  
Don't Know – 2%