

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 3 APRIL 2001

THE EXCELLENCE FUND FOR SCHOOLS: YEAR 3

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To inform members of the most recent developments within the Excellence Fund and to seek approval for an implementation framework for Year 3.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Members will recall that the Excellence Fund Core Programme brings substantial funding to school in order to support initiatives that relate to national priorities. Within the Excellence Fund, improvement plans are developed at local level and approved by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Funding is ring-fenced to the Excellence Fund Core Programmes and Special Programmes. It is claimed back from the Scottish Executive on the basis of reimbursement of the money spent by the Authority to support the improvement plans.
- 2.2** East Ayrshire's approach to the Excellence Fund was approved by the Education Committee at its meeting of 28 January 1999 and subsequently re-affirmed on 20 March 2000.

3. THE EXCELLENCE FUND IN YEAR 3

- 3.1** In Year 3, the Excellence Fund Core Programmes will attract £125,600,000 worth of funding. East Ayrshire's share of this will be £3,468,907.
- 3.2** The main headings that were used in Year 1 of the fund will be retained with some exceptions. Within the heading of "Support for Teachers", the Scottish Executive is not allocating any money for Community Education. Instead funding is going direct to the national advisory body to support the service. A new heading of "Inclusion" was added in Year 2 to assist with the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream provision.
- 3.3** For East Ayrshire, the approach has been to delegate as much funding to schools as possible. This strategy was sustained into Year 2 and will be maintained into Year 3.
- 3.4** As happened in Years 1 and 2, improvement plans must be submitted to the Scottish Executive in order to secure funding for those programmes where there is to be any substantial change, or additional funds have been allocated by SEED. It is also necessary to submit an evaluation report by the summer of 2001 for the Year 2 Programmes to describe what has been achieved using this money.

4. THE EXCELLENCE FUND CORE PROGRAMMES

4.1 Alternatives to Exclusion

Funding Allocated in Year 3: £252,974

Funds will be delegated to schools in order that they can develop resources to support children at risk of exclusion, and thereby assist in the achievement of a 30% reduction in exclusions by 2002.. Alternative approaches to the curriculum have been developed involving Outdoor education and partner organisations in the voluntary sector. A review of the overall approach to Alternatives to Exclusion has been undertaken. A revised Improvement Plan will be produced. This will retain the basic features of the original programme but will deliver a greater proportion of resources to directly support class teachers through Framework for Intervention and greater involvement in the Primary Sector and Early Years. A detailed report will be submitted to Committee in due course.

4.2 Study Support

Funding Allocated in Year 3: £254,386

As in Years 1 and 2, a range of strategies will be employed. Secondary schools will be invited to run Easter schools aimed at raising attainment in national examinations. Additionally, summer schools, including one for children with special educational needs, will be organised at Authority and school level. These will promote an interest in learning through a combination of activities. The Arts will be a particular point of emphasis.

4.3 Early Intervention

Funding Allocated in Year 3: £326,557

Existing work will be consolidated. This established and successful programme will consolidate literacy and numeracy skills in the early years with children upto P3 age continuing to benefit. The already established good practice will be extended to the middle years of the primary schools.

4.4 Supporting Parents

Funding Allocated in Year 3: £126,487

Home-school link staff are in place now thanks to the Year 1 and 2 funding. Their work will now be developed particularly in relation to "looked-after" children for whom the authority has a particular responsibility. Under this scheme, a wide number of establishments will benefit from support. Work will be co-ordinated with New Community Schools projects

4.5 Classroom Assistants

Funding Allocated in Year 3: £1,228,554

The programme of appointing classroom assistants to schools will continue. The additional funding will allow a considerable expansion of the numbers of classroom assistants. Allocations to schools will be linked to targets within

the 1:15 adult : child ratios set by the Scottish Executive, and will also be directly linked to supporting improvements in attainment. The training provided for new appointees in partnership with the Further Education sector will be reviewed and developed appropriately. Owing to the substantial increase in funding an updated Improvement Plan will be submitted to SEED.

4.6 Reducing Class Sizes
Funding Allocated in Year 3: £231,512

Additional teachers have been appointed to reduce class sizes in primary schools at years P1 to P3. This initiative will continue with additional staffing being distributed to where there is established need. The Education Department is currently negotiating with the Scottish Executive to secure maximum benefit from funding.

4.7 Support for Teachers
Funding Allocated in Year 3: £240,548

This programme is in effect a combination of sub-programmes covering 5-14, probationer teachers, the Scottish Qualification for Headship, education for industry and (subject to national agreement) advanced skills teachers. Provision here will be geared to school development plans and the personal and professional development needs of individual staff.

4.8 Higher Still
Funding Allocated in Year 3: £123,124

The Higher Still programme continues with the introduction of Advanced Higher and certain subjects at lower levels. An authority strategy group exists and the funds will be used in support of the plans produced by this group. Establishments in the secondary and special sectors will benefit from this funding.

4.9 National Grid for Learning
Funding Allocated in Year 3: £602,664

Key staff have been appointed to support schools with the expansion of their computing networks. The programme of expansion will proceed using the Authority's strategy for Information communications technology (ICT). This programme is complemented by a separate funding allocation for staff training that is administered by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). Owing to the earlier work done in the Authority, East Ayrshire is extremely well advanced in relation to other parts of the country. In due course a revised and updated ICT strategy will be produced for consideration by Committee.

4.10 Inclusion Funding Allocated in Year 3: £313,613

This is allocation of funding started in Year 2 of the Excellence Fund to assist the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream. The main element will continue to go in additional staffing, but this will be supported by improved access provision through adaptations to buildings, improved resources and some specific staff training.

- 4.11** It is a requirement of the Excellence Fund Core Programmes that improvements in service provision can be demonstrated. Detailed, revised plans have to be produced, implemented and monitored. The strategy approved by Committee is that this should align with the Council's overall approach to Best Value. These processes will also be supported through Excellence Fund resources.

5. THE EXCELLENCE FUND SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

5.1 New Community Schools : £400,000

The Community School project that has been operating in Kilmarnock has been joined by the Cumnock Project which was recently announced by the Scottish Executive. Each New Community School Project is supported by a specific 3-Year proposal which has been approved by the Scottish Executive. The addition of the Cumnock project effectively doubles the amount of resourcing available to support this initiative.

5.2 Action Plan : £100,000

The Action Plan supports the improvement of attainment in the Grange, Bellfield and Shortlees areas of Kilmarnock. This is a highly innovative project which employs the use of computers to directly support learning and the raising of attainment. There is no uplift of funding associated with the Action Plan, which is again a three-year planned project that works under specific SEED approval.

5.3 Specialist Provision : £370,000

This funding element supports the Partners in Excellence modern languages initiative. A partnership project linked to other authorities using ICT, this is also a specific 3-year project that carries its own project proposal and costed action plan.

6. FINANCIAL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The financial implications are described in outline in the previous sections of the report. All funds related to the Excellence Fund are ring-fenced and must be spent in relation to the area of provision for which they are specified. The Council is accountable for ensuring that actual spending accords with the

specific improvement plans submitted to, and approved by, the Scottish Executive.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) approve this report as a basis for the use of the Excellence Fund in Year 3; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Education

GRS/grs
20 February 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. The Excellence Fund for Schools: Core Programme, Education Committee 28 January 1999
2. Excellence Fund for Schools Year 2, Education Committee 20 March 2000

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools (Tel: 01563-576089)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : Graham Short

AGENDA