

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2000

IMPROVING OUR SCHOOLS: RESPONSES TO THE RIDDELL REPORT

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To inform Members of the contents of the document “Improving Our Schools: Responses to the Riddell Report”.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In September 1999, the Minister for Children and Education launched a consultation exercise on the Riddell Advisory Committee Report into the educational provision for children with severe low incidence disabilities. The Scottish executive have now issued a further document which is a commentary on the responses to Riddell’s 22 recommendations. Further comments are sought on this document.
- 2.2** Copies off both the original Riddell Report and this new document are available in the Members’ Lounge.

3. SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 3.1** The document is written in brief summary form with only 15 pages of text. Apart from a brief discussion of each issue, a number of key points are highlighted:
- ✓ The Scottish Executive will review how information is collected in School Census exercises with a view to providing more accurate statistics across authorities. (in connection with low incidence disability).
 - ✓ The National SEN Advisory Forum will examine the current Records of Needs process and will advise on how this can be improved or updated.
 - ✓ The Scottish Executive is considering the separate devolved issue of planning to improve access to school education. (This is in connection to the issue of Disability Discrimination).
 - ✓ The National SEN Advisory Forum will commission a project to draw together up-to-date advice for staff to hear and take account of the views of children and young people.
 - ✓ The National SEN Advisory Forum will examine the legislative position of inter-agency joint funding responsibilities and consider the need for national guidance.

- ✓ The Scottish executive will announce decisions on revised funding arrangements for grant aided special schools in the light of discussion with the schools and with CoSLA.
- ✓ The Scottish executive will commission a research study into evaluating the impact of in-service SEN training.

3.2 Beyond this programme of further measures that are to be included in the national Programme of Action on Special Educational Needs, there is a discussion of a number of areas of activity:

- ✓ The remit and priorities of the National SEN Advisory Forum
- ✓ The Legislative Framework
- ✓ Disability discrimination
- ✓ Inclusion
- ✓ Views of Children and Young People
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Therapy services
- ✓ New Community Schools
- ✓ Play
- ✓ Administration of Medicines
- ✓ Grant-Aided schools
- ✓ The Independent Sector
- ✓ Length of the School Week in Special Schools
- ✓ Staff Development and Training
- ✓ SEN Auxiliaries
- ✓ Post-School provision

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The contents of this document are in line with the policies of East Ayrshire Council in that they seek to promote the interests of children and young people with special educational needs. The recognition of issues such as inclusion and Disability Discrimination are particularly welcome.

4.2 At the operational level there is a recognition that a number of important and problematic matters require to be addressed. These include the role of SEN auxiliaries, provision of therapeutic services and the administration of medicines. None of these can be completely resolved at local level and require more thought nationally.

4.3 Members will also be aware that some of the issues covered in this document are related to other developments. These include the new Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill, revision of the Schools (Scotland Code), and the national priorities for improvement. It is to be hoped that the changes that come from these three main sources are built into a single well-planned and phased programme of improvement, accompanied by adequate funding.

5. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Nil

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members :

- (i) agree that the Director of Education and Social Services write to the Scottish Executive seeking reassurance that the response to the Riddell report will be built into the national improvement framework in a realistic and manageable way; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/DL
4 July 2000

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

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill Education Committee Paper - 3 February 2000.
2. Schools (Scotland) Code: Education Committee Paper - 8 June 2000.

Implementation Officer: Graham Short

AGENDA