

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 14 June 2023

Chair:

Councillor Mark McGeever

Councillors Present:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Grant Ferguson

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor Bert Thomson

Attending:

Education Resources

K Reilly, Quality Improvement Officer (East Kilbride)

Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; S Jessup, Administration Assistant; E-A McGonigle, Administration Officer

Also Attending:

Strathaven Academy

L Devlin, pupil; J Hamilton, Modern Studies Teacher; I Raeburn, pupil

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Equal Opportunities Forum held on 29 March 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Forum decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Strathaven Learning Community: Thriving Together - An Anti-Racism Education Project

A presentation was given on the Strathaven Learning Community: Thriving Together – An Anti-Racism project by the following representatives of Strathaven Academy:-

- ◆ J Hamilton, Modern Studies Teacher
- ◆ L Devlin, pupil
- ◆ I Raeburn, pupil

An increased number of racial incidents had been encountered at Strathaven Academy over the last year or so and this had prompted the school to take action to address the problem. The majority of those incidents were found to stem from ignorance rather than malicious intent. The anti-racism project was initiated with the aim of providing students with a better understanding of the variety of races that existed in British society.

This project would be delivered in phases and phase one of the project had been completed. Details were provided on phase one of the project as follows:-

- ◆ this focused on the Asian Pakistani ethnic minority group which was the largest minority group in South Lanarkshire and, indeed, in Strathaven Academy:-
 - ◆ of 25,008 secondary school pupils in South Lanarkshire, only 493 were Asian Pakistani and this equated to the largest minority group despite the low numbers
- ◆ the project was literacy based and funding had been secured through the Scottish Library Improvement Fund
- ◆ the book selected for this phase was 'Planet Omar' and it focused on the life of a young British boy of Asian Pakistani descent who was transitioning from one school to another and detailed the struggles he and his family faced
- ◆ the focus was on Primary 7 pupils and having read the text those pupils were invited to Strathaven Academy for a day to participate in a series of workshops which aimed to:-
 - ◆ tackle race discrimination
 - ◆ discuss Planet Omar
 - ◆ achieve a better understanding of the Asian Pakistani minority group
- ◆ in the lead up to the workshops, the project had also been piloted with S1 pupils
- ◆ at the end of phase one, pupils felt more informed and better equipped to ask questions about race

L Devlin and I Raeburn spoke about their individual experiences of phase one of the project and what they learned from Planet Omar and the workshops.

The next phase would involve the next S1 cohort, and that included those Primary 7 pupils from phase one. Phase 3 would be similar to phase one of the project, however, a different minority group or protected characteristic would be selected. The project would still be literacy based and pupils would be fully engaged with selection of the text.

J Hamilton responded to members' questions on various aspects of the project.

J Hamilton, L Devlin and I Raeburn were thanked for their informative presentation.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

4 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Education Resources

A report dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Director (Education Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Education Resources to meet the commitments within the Mainstreaming Equalities Progress Report 2019 to 2021 and Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2021 to 2025.

The Council had published its "Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2021 to 2025" in April 2021. The new Equality Outcomes set for 2021 to 2025 would focus on actions to produce results intended to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances. The Resource would lead on Equality Outcome 3:-

- ◆ 'Counselling through schools' service is accessible for all children/young people aged 10 and over'

This Outcome would be progressed by the Education Psychological Service and a Quality Improvement Officer (Inclusive Education Service), and actions to achieve this outcome were detailed at Appendix 1 to the report .

The Resource had continued to build on progress made and remained committed to embedding equalities across all aspects of service provision. Progress of activity and the impact of activities undertaken were detailed at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Quality Improvement Officer (Inclusive Education Service) contributed to the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group. Over the course of the year, the Resource carried out 9 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report. Training for new users of the EQIA system was being arranged and refresher training was provided where requested.

The report detailed strategic and operational activities that had been undertaken or planned by the Resource in relation to the following:-

- ◆ race equality and anti-racist education
- ◆ supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people in school
- ◆ supporting children and young people with disability and autism
- ◆ implementing and monitoring an Accessibility Strategy
- ◆ Deaf education and British Sign Language (BSL)

Details were provided on next steps and priorities for the Resource over the next academic year which included:-

- ◆ launching an equalities web resource in August 2023 with resources, advice and guidance for schools
- ◆ continuing to pilot pupil Equality Ambassador groups at Hamilton Grammar school and Mount Cameron Primary School, working with the Inclusive Education Service to develop training materials for primary and secondary pupils
- ◆ ensuring all schools recorded incidents of bullying on the SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities module to enable prejudice-based bullying to be monitored
- ◆ continuing to progress work on anti-racism education, including the development of curricular guidelines for schools
- ◆ continuing to build capacity in schools to enable staff to work effectively with pupils with complex additional support needs
- ◆ continuing the commitment to staff training and development in relation to equality and diversity related issues

The Quality Improvement Officer (East Kilbride) responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 24 November 2021 (Paragraph 3)]

5 Implementation of British Sign Language (BSL) across Education Resources

A report dated 23 May 2023 by the Executive Director (Education Resources) was submitted providing an update on the work being undertaken and planned by Education Resources to contribute towards the long-term goals within the Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Lanarkshire 2018 to 2024.

South Lanarkshire Council currently offered provision for Deaf Education in Hamilton School for the Deaf (primary) and Calderside Academy (secondary). The work of both schools could be set out within the framework of identified long-term goals in the BSL Plan for Lanarkshire 2018 to 2024 as follows:-

- ◆ offering D/deaf and Deafblind children and their families the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL
- ◆ supporting children and young people to:-
 - ◆ reach their full potential at every stage of their learning
 - ◆ offer parents who used BSL the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their children's education
 - ◆ enable more pupils to learn BSL at school
- ◆ supporting BSL users to develop skills for work and to progress in their chosen career
- ◆ enabling BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals

Further details of those long-term goals were set out in sections 4 to 9 of the report.

Details were also provided on the next steps and priorities and those included:-

- ◆ offering primary school pupils the opportunity to achieve BSL Level 1 before moving to secondary school
- ◆ promoting The Highland Council BSL pack as a resource to teach BSL across education settings in South Lanarkshire

There followed a discussion around the obstacles and exclusions faced by Deaf BSL users due to the shortage of interpreters and the fact that ensuring BSL was embedded in the language curriculum in schools would help to cultivate future BSL tutors and interpreters. The Employee Development and Diversity Manager added that employees had also been offered courses in BSL as a developmental opportunity and introductory courses had been offered to elected members.

The Forum decided: that the work being undertaken by Education Resources in terms of support for British Sign Language (BSL) be noted.

6 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Chair's Closing Remarks

The Chair, on behalf of the members of the Forum, thanked K McVeigh for her exemplary work and advice to the Forum over the years and wished her well on her retirement.