

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

23 April 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 194/96

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING POLICY STATEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a approves the enclosed policy statement for circulation throughout the education service in Angus, and
- b instructs me to make use of the policy statement to develop more detailed statements on aspects of Support for Learning as and when it is appropriate to do so.

BACKGROUND

The umbrella title of "Support for Learning" has now crept into common usage within the Angus education service, and there is believed to be merit in continuing to use this phrase to describe the activities undertaken to support effective learning and teaching for all learners, but particularly for those who have a Record of Need or who may require specific short-term or long-term additional support

In recent years significant developments in the approaches taken to provide for the needs of all learners, including those with special needs, have taken place. Legislative requirements, parental expectations and professional opinion have combined to produce a varied pattern of provision for children and young people with special needs, based increasingly on the needs of the individual child and less on rigid educational structures. The most obvious manifestation of these developments is the number of children with a Record of Special Educational Needs whose needs are being met in mainstream schools. Given the pace at which these developments have taken place, (and continue to take place), it is important that the Council sets out its policy direction as clearly as possible.

Accordingly, a small short-life working group was set up in December 1995 to identify and recommend those aspects of Support for Learning to which priority attention ought to be given by Angus Council. The group has largely discharged this remit, and specific tasks pertinent to Support for Learning are now being tackled by officers of the Council.

The working group have recommended that a brief policy statement ought to be issued by the Education Committee to enable the detailed work now being undertaken to be developed within a clear Council policy framework. The enclosed statement is recommended by the working group to the Committee for its approval.

JIM ANDERSON

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/CJ

Appendix 1

ANGUS COUNCIL - EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING - POLICY STATEMENT

Angus Council will encourage attitudes and procedures which offer the opportunity of a high quality learning experience for all learners, an experience which can be resourced at a sustainable level. Support for Learning will be promoted as an integral part of a whole Council approach to effective learning and teaching, and will be taken to be the umbrella phrase which describes the various approaches taken to support all learners, particularly those who have a Record of Need, or who require specific short-term or long-term additional support.

The ethos of the whole Council, together with the particular ethos evinced in individual departments, schools and services, is seen as particularly important. Key characteristics of the ethos for which we are striving are:

- **team-based approach**, with all members of staff, including school-based staff, peripatetic staff, support service staff, and all centrally based staff, working together in the interests of the individual child, and also of the whole pupil population, in ways which staff themselves find mutually supportive
- **partnership with parents, young people and children**, with positive approaches to genuine involvement of these key stakeholders in the education process
- **valuing the individual learner**, and encouraging the learner to value herself/himself
- **pragmatic approaches to meeting need**, based on individual circumstances, with encouragement given to allow staff to seek appropriate solutions based neither on dogma nor rigid formulae, but rather on common sense and a sound working knowledge of current needs and available resources
- **forward planning**, with a systematic approach involving a full range of participants whilst avoiding overly bureaucratic procedures
- **reflective, problem-solving approach** to ensure practice is constantly improving
- **positive outlook**, encouraging colleagues and learners to seek opportunities as well as combating threats
- **effective preparation of learners for the future**, implying a worthwhile educational experience but one which allows the learner to develop and move on when she/he is ready to do so
- **proactive approach to learners' needs**, emphasising the importance of early identification of possible difficulties and of appropriate intervention to attempt to see these difficulties being avoided.

Detailed planning to meet the special needs of individual children will normally start by considering how best the child's local mainstream school can meet these needs, but if it is evident that the local school would be an inappropriate placement, other options will be considered. Parents have a critical role in this process, but not the only role - it is also important that individual members of staff have the opportunity to state clearly and openly their own personal professional opinions so that initial placements of children are likely to be the most appropriate. The current range of provision should continue to be available to all Angus learners, with regular review to identify ways of improving or re-positioning that provision.

Resources will continue to be finite, and it is important that existing resources - principally staff - are seen to have been fairly and consistently deployed. Further evolution of a more open system of deployment of all staff, but particularly Support for Learning staff, will be encouraged - within schools, across groups of schools, and indeed across all schools and services.

The starting point of all planning must always be the provision of a stimulating and relevant educational experience wherein all learners feel valued and which is informed by core principles of effective learning and teaching. However, there is a particular challenge for the education service in addressing the needs of the disaffected and those children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

It is also fully recognised that some young people are experiencing difficulties whose roots lie outwith the education service. There will therefore always be a challenge posed to the service by some reluctant learners, some of whom may also be engaged in anti-social activities which impinge on the whole community. In terms of its statutory obligations the education authority must make adequate provision for these reluctant learners; it must also ensure that by so doing it does not diminish the educational experience for the school population as a whole; and finally it must provide for reluctant learners in a way which is of value in preparing these learners for the future as valued citizens. Ideally, a range of provision should be available to address these issues, the overwhelming majority of which will be located within local mainstream schools. Identifying adequate funding to provide resources which make the full range of desirable provision effective is a continuing problem. Nonetheless, there is a commitment to developing further a sustainable level of provision.

It is hoped this brief statement will provide a helpful point of reference for the continuing review of Support for Learning generally, and for specific aspects of it. More detailed statements about these aspects will be developed in partnership with all staff.