

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
16 OCTOBER 2001
BEST VALUE REVIEW
SECONDARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN: PROGRESS REPORT
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to advise the Education Committee of progress being made in relation to the Secondary Education Best Value Service Improvement Plan.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report
- (b) notes the arrangements made to monitor progress in implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan
- (c) notes the considerable progress made in implementing the improvements identified within the ten sections of that plan; specific progress for each section of the plan is indicated in a detailed progress report copies of which are available in the Members' Lounge.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 22 August 2000 when the Committee approved the Secondary Education Best Value Review and its accompanying Improvement Plan (Article 2 refers).

2.2 The Improvement Plan mirrored the structure of the Best value Report and included detailed recommendations for improvement in the following ten aspects of secondary education in Angus:

- (a) Overall pupil attainment and quality of learning and teaching in S1/S2
- (b) Curriculum
- (c) Teacher Staffing
- (d) Timetabling
- (e) Support for Pupils
- (f) Staff Development
- (g) Quality Assurance
- (h) School Administration
- (i) Technical/ICT Support
- (j) Financial Management

2.3 The Best Value Report included comprehensive evaluation reports for these ten aspects of secondary education in Angus.

2.4 It is worth noting that the evaluation report in relation to the quality of learning and teaching in S1/S2 summarised the findings of a research exercise conducted by Dr Brian Boyd of the University of Strathclyde and Professor Mary Simpson of the University of Edinburgh. Their research report, "Developing a Framework for Effective Learning and Teaching in S1/S2 in Angus Secondary Schools" was the subject of a separate report approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 6 June 2000 (Article 6 refers).

3 ARRANGEMENTS TO MONITOR PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

3.1 Given the scope of the Secondary Education Best Value Review and of the related Improvement Plan, it was decided to establish a monitoring and implementation group. The group was set up in September 2000 and its membership drawn from Directorate, Educational Development Service, Secondary Head Teachers and senior central administration staff.

3.2 Regular meetings of this group have enabled progress to be monitored with reference to:

- Improvement Plan position statements drawn up by each school in consultation with the school's Link Adviser
- Action plans in relation to the Boyd/Simpson report referred to in paragraph 2.4 above
- Action plans drawn up by HQ staff particularly in relation to those aspects of the secondary education service listed in 2.2(h)-(j) above

3.3 The monitoring information gathered between October 2000–June 2001 resulted in the completion of an extensive progress report which is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge.

4 OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS TO DATE

4.1 The following observations provide a summary of the considerable progress made in implementing Best Value Improvements in the period August 2000-June 2001:

- responsibility for addressing each improvement has been allocated to key officers or key working groups
- of the 40 improvements scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2001, 33 had been overtaken by that date
- 62 of the Improvement Plan's 76 recommendations have specified timescales and it is anticipated that these will largely be met; timescales not met to date relate in the main to SQA developments which were adversely affected by the SQA Diet 2000 crisis
- improvements whose management lies with Head Teachers have been framed in school action plans which are the subject of regular progress/position statements drawn up in the course of formal Link Adviser school visits
- each secondary school has established a strategy group to take forward the curriculum recommendations made in the Boyd/Simpson report; it is clear the Authority's expectations in relation to "Achieving Success in S1/S2" commitments are being addressed effectively through the work of these groups
- there has been an extremely positive response to the Boyd/Simpson report from Angus schools and from further afield – several hundred copies of the report have been sold to Education Authorities, Higher Education institutions and schools across Scotland
- all schools have received a CD version of the Best Value Report
- this CD includes Pinpoint software used in conducting the 47 stakeholder surveys carried out in the course of the Secondary Best Value Review
- key school staff have received training in the use of this software which enables surveys to be constructed and survey data to be managed efficiently – schools will increasingly make use of this tool to support a Best Value commitment to regular consultations with pupils and parents [section 8.7 of Best Value Improvement Plan refers]
- service level agreements in respect of the Education ICT Team and Central Technician Service are now in place; these are designed to ensure value for money and to provide a more informed and responsive service to schools
- improved support, communication and training procedures are now in place for Secondary School Administration staff
- "Time for Teaching" audit recommendations incorporated within the Best Value Improvement Plan have informed early decisions made in relation to the use of funds made available through the McCrone Agreement to appoint additional support staff to schools; proposals in respect of these monies were approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 21 August 2001 (Article 9 refers)
- quality assurance recommendations are informing Link Adviser school visits and key training events
- throughout September 2001 a programme of eight training seminars for Secondary Principal Teachers took place – the focus of the seminars was significantly informed by the quality assurance recommendations of the Best Value Report

- arrangements to monitor and support improvements detailed in the Improvement Plan are operating effectively and have influenced the priorities for development identified in the 2001-2004 Education Service Plan

5 CONCLUSION

Considerable effort is being made by Secondary Head Teachers and Authority support staff in addressing the ten sub-reports which made up the overall Secondary Education Best Value Report. It is pleasing to note the progress which has been made within one school session of the report being issued. I am confident that outstanding commitments will be addressed effectively. It is undoubtedly the case that focused improvements in key areas of secondary education in Angus have resulted from the Best Value exercise.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

8 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Secondary Head Teachers have been consulted in the preparation of the detailed progress report which is the subject of this Committee Report.

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.

NL/AR