

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 19 MAY 2015

CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOL DAY FOR P1-3 PUPILS

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report summarises the main findings of a recent consultation undertaken with parents and teachers relating to the structure of the school day for children in primary 1-3 classes in Angus schools. This consultation considered parental and staff opinions about the value of play and physical activity for young children and asked for their views on the links between play and learning in the early years of school. Proposals for changes to the structure of the school day and four models to increase time directed towards play and physical activity were outlined and feedback on these sought.

1 RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) note the main findings of the parental survey
- (ii) note the main findings of the staff survey
- (iii) approve arrangements to standardise the school day for all pupils in Angus primary schools as in 5.1
- (iv) approve the decision **not to** proceed to reduce teacher contact time for primary 1-3 pupils to 22.5 hours per week
- (v) approve the decision to develop local play guidelines for Angus taking full cognisance of the national play strategy guidance

2 ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- *Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens*

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reference is made to Report 80/15 through which a request to consult with parents on the School Day for Primary 1-3 pupils was made at the Children and Learning Committee on 24 February 2015 and approval granted.
- 3.2 Parents and staff were offered the opportunity to complete an electronic survey or hard copy survey. Face to face meetings were also offered to all parents who completed the survey questionnaire.
- 3.3 The survey was structured into 4 key sections:

Section 1 outlined the vision of the national Play Strategy for Scotland which values play as a life enhancing daily experience for all children and young people. Parental and staff views were sought relating to the need for regular opportunities for play in the early years of school. Parents and staff were able to evaluate the current provision of play and physical activity in the school their child attends or in the school they work in and determine whether children in primary 1-3 should have opportunities for play and physical activity.

Section 2 sought views relating to the links between play and learning. This provided opportunities for parents and staff to reflect on the skills, attitudes and dispositions that play helps children to develop and how these can impact on attainment.

Section 3 sought views on the structure of the school day for all primary 1-3 pupils. Information was shared relating to the lack of consistency in the number of hours our younger children spend in school. Across Angus schools this varies from 23 hours 20 minutes to 25 hours. This section also gave parents and staff the opportunity to consider whether the school day across all schools should be standardised.

Section 4 asked staff and parents if children should be taught by the main class teachers for 22.5 hours and the rest of time in school directed towards play and physical activity. The reduction in teacher contact time was overtly stated. Three models were outlined which reduce teacher contact time to 22.5 hours and direct the remainder of the time towards play and physical activity. The fourth model proposed offered no changes to the current arrangements.

3.4 The main aim of the survey was to seek feedback from parents and staff on our aims to ensure that:

- Outdoor, unstructured play is valued as a real learning experience in all primary schools and that the contribution it makes to the physical and social development of our youngest learners is fully recognised
- Consistent timings of the primary school day are in place and applied across all primary schools in Angus
- New structures will help schools plan to manage the reduced contact time for teachers teaching in primary 1-3 classes and promote a greater portion of time for play based learning for young pupils
- Adequate time is allocated for an increased number of pupils to enjoy school meals and effective delivery and management of this service at school level

4 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 1,123 parents responded to the electronic survey and 87 responded through hard copy.
- 4.2 Two parental focus groups were held on Monday 20 April 2015 and a total of 43 parents attended on the day. These sessions enabled parents to discuss the general outcomes of the survey and to consider how we can improve the quality of structured and unstructured play across all schools.
- 4.3 310 members of staff responded to the electronic staff survey
- 4.4 Feedback from parents on the value of play and physical activity in the early years was extremely positive. 97% of these respondents felt that children should have regular opportunities for play and 96% valued the contribution this makes to the health and wellbeing of children. 86% of respondents felt that school currently offer opportunities for play for younger children and 96% felt that play and physical activity should be offered in schools for P1-3 children. This positive response was consistent with feedback from staff with 99% of staff valuing play and physical activity.
- 4.5 The links between play, physical activity and the learning of children was also acknowledged by staff and parents alike with more than 86% of respondents agreeing that the dispositions of

motivation, self-confidence, co-operation, resilience, responsibility, respect and tolerance are enhanced through play and physical activity. 73% of all respondents agreed that schools should offer further opportunities for children to learn through play and physical activities.

- 4.6 Parental views on the structure of the school day showed that 78% of respondents felt that a common school day of 9.00am. – 3.20pm was agreeable. 66% of these felt that any additional time spent in school should be directed towards play and physical activity with 74% agreeing that children should have as few teachers as possible in the school week. Staff views on this were less positive with only 46% of staff respondents agreeing that any additional time in school should be directed towards play and physical activity and 28% agreeing that children should have as few teachers as possible in a week.
- 4.7 The reduction of teacher contact time to 22.5 hours per week for children in primary 1-3 was agreed by 39% of parental respondents and 30% of staff respondents. 61% of parents and 70% of teachers who responded disagreed with the proposal. There were a large number of comments related to this with concerns about reduction in teacher contact time and the impact this would have on attainment.
- 4.8 The following table outlines each of the four models proposed and the percentage of parents and staff who ranked each model as their **first** choice.

Model	Description	% Of parents who ranked this as first choice	% of staff who ranked this as first choice
A	A half hour is added onto the lunch break each day to ensure that children have adequate playtime with the introduction of free school meals and anticipated enhanced numbers. The additional half hour of play will be unstructured and supervision will be met within the existing PSA staffing of the school. There may be a need to provide PSA training in observation and play development to ensure this additional play time informs staff knowledge of pupil learning, development and social skills.	22.2%	19.5%
B	There is a 30 minute play interval in the morning and a twenty minute play interval in the afternoon each day. Play during the morning playtime will be unstructured and semi-structured during the afternoon slot. Supervision will be met from the existing PSA staffing of the school. There may be a need to provide PSA training in observation and play development/facilitation to ensure this additional play time informs staff knowledge of pupil learning, development and social skills.	26.4%	17.5%
C	A half hour per day is planned for active/together time which could be within class or outwith class. This would be led by the PSA team and involve either unstructured play outside or activities in class. This could be in groups of up to 15. This may have implications for increased PSA staffing depending on the current allocation to the schools and how the schools planned their timetable across P1-3 classes. There may also be implications for staff training in relation to observation and promotion of early learning and development through structured play activities. In this model schools can choose the exact timings for the active play/together sessions	17.7%	14.6%

	based on school and/or class need.		
D	This model offers no change to the current arrangements	33.7%	48.4%

5 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Approval is sought to explore a common approach to the timing of the school day for all Angus primary schools. This will take account of local transport arrangements.
- 5.2 As 61% of parents and 70% of staff did not agree with any reduction to teacher contact time. It is proposed that no changes are made to the number of hours pupils in primary 1-3 have contact with a teacher. This view is reinforced by the number of staff and parents whose first preference was for there to be no changes made to current arrangements for play time in school. 33.7% of parents and 48.4% of staff recorded Model D as their first choice from the four models on offer.
- 5.3 Local play guidelines will be developed by December 2015 taking account of guidance included in the national play strategy and relevant research on the value of both structured and unstructured play for young children. This guidance should, take account of the parental and staff views gathered from both the survey and focus group meetings related to ways in which we can improve the quality and value of play on offer in our schools and ensure a more consistent approach across Angus.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any changes to the timing of the school day will take account of local transport arrangements thus ensuring costs will be contained within existing resources.

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

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