

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 24 FEBRUARY 2015

CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOL DAY FOR PRIMARY 1-3 PUPILS

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report outlines plans to consult with parents and school staff on the structure of the school day for all children in primary 1-3 classes.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approve the request to proceed to consultation as outlined in section five.
- (ii) Following consultation, request a full report on the outcome of the consultation for change to the structure of the P1 to P3 school day.

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

This report contributes to the following local outcomes 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 The Scottish Government's Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Framework (<http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/media/1551/GoPlayOEF.pdf>) was launched in March 2012. The Government has been working closely with 'Inspiring Scotland' to provide the basis for a sustainable and active play sector in Scotland, focusing on freely chosen play for 5 to 13 year olds. A Play Strategy for Scotland was developed by the Scottish Government in 2013 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00425722.pdf>). This strategy highlights that play is not just crucial to the wellbeing of each child, it is essential to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Scotland as a whole. The Play Strategy's vision states,

'We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.'

- 3.2 Play is the way most humans, but especially young children, make sense of their world. Play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning. Active learning means using your brain in lots of ways. Through play, children learn to form attachments, negotiate, take risks and overcome obstacles. They explore the world and practise social and language skills that may be more complex than in everyday activities. Friendships are developed alongside a sense of belonging to a group. Physical skills are expanded and challenged and children learn through play to think and express themselves creatively. Through play children learn:

- Positive attitudes of self-motivation and self-direction, self-confidence, cooperation and group values
- Curiosity, persistence and concentration

- Language and numeracy.

3.3 The focus on ensuring children have appropriate opportunities for unstructured free play, coupled with the current focus in schools on developing outdoor learning and personal resilience, has led us to think carefully about how we can promote play and outdoor learning in conjunction with the implementation of the new national requirement of free meals for all children in primary one to primary three.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Children have opportunities to participate in unstructured outdoor play during the school day at playtime and lunchtime. There is variability across schools in the amount of time devoted to outdoor play and the value placed on these opportunities as learning experiences.

4.2 The nationally agreed package of pay and conditions of service for Scottish teachers “A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century” included provision for all teachers to have a maximum number of hours per week for pupil contact. Accordingly, the Angus Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers agreed how the required (22½ hour) contractual arrangements should be implemented for Angus Council’s primary school teachers. There is great variability across schools in the management of the 22 ½ contractual class contact time for all pupils, especially those in the early years of primary school and Head Teachers have requested that a more transparent and consistent system is put in place.

4.3 The current Council guidelines on the length of the school day for primary pupils recommend a shorter day for Primary 1 and Primary 2 pupils – a day lasting 4 hours 40 minutes. Schools are advised to apply these guidelines, so that the normal pupil week for Primary 1/Primary 2 pupils is 23 hours 20 minutes. There is variability between and within schools in terms of start and finish times for pupils at different stages.

4.4 The introduction of free school meals for all pupils in Primary 1-3 from January 2015 and the anticipated rise in numbers of pupils taking a school lunch has also meant that schools have needed to review their arrangements to ensure adequate time for pupils to enjoy their school lunch and to have adequate time to play.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 We are seeking approval to consult with parents and staff on the structure of the school day. It is anticipated that this consultation will be completed by the end of April 2015. In order to maximise stakeholder feedback, it is proposed to use electronic surveys as well as face to face consultation.

5.2 This consultation exercise will explore options for change which will help schools address all the challenges outlined in section four of this report. We will be looking to find new ways of working to ensure that any options identified for further consideration will 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 for an increased number of pupils to enjoy school meals and effective delivery and management of this service at school level.

5.3 A range of preferred options will be brought to the Children and Learning Committee on 19 May 2015 for approval.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs involved in the consultation exercise will in the main be staff time and this can be met from existing resources. A full cost benefit analysis of any preferred options will be set out in the future committee report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues contained in this report do not fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

The following background papers were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report:

Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Framework

<http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/media/1551/GoPlayOEF.pdf>

Scottish Government Play Strategy

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00425722.pdf>

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