

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 9 JANUARY 2018

FIRST IMPRESSIONS REVIEW OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL WEEK

REPORT BY PAULINE STEPHEN, HEAD OF SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

ABSTRACT

Changes to the configuration of the secondary school week were implemented in August 2017 after extensive consultation. This report provides a 'first impressions' review of the changes to the secondary school week. It concentrates on the views of Angus' young people who have experienced the change firsthand. A further evaluation will be conducted at the end of this school session and will seek broader stakeholder views.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Note the outcomes of the first impressions review of the changes to the secondary school week outlined in section 4 of this report
- (ii) Agree to the proposals for future action set out in section 5 of this report.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

More opportunities for people to achieve success.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Children and Learning Committee on 12 February 2015, Report 81/15 was approved to consult with stakeholders regarding the structure of the Secondary school week. Following on from this, consultation was carried out with Secondary school staff and Parent Councils in September 2015. Angus Council considered report 434/15, on the consultation with Secondary School staff and Parent Councils regarding proposed changes to the school week. The report detailed the results of a survey completed by 216 secondary school staff which found that 64.4% of respondents wished a change in the current school week, with 55.1% supporting a change to a thirty three period week. A majority of Parent Councils at that time were also in favour of changes to the Secondary school week.
- 3.2 Elected Members asked for further consultation with all stakeholders. Further detailed consultation was reported to committee in May 2016 (report 204/16), which indicated that the majority of young people (63%) and staff (59%) were in favour of changes to the secondary school week whereas parents' opinions were evenly split (50%). Angus Council agreed with the Children and Learning Committee Report 204/16, to move to the new secondary school week from August 2017. It was confirmed to Children and Learning Committee on 8 November 2016 that the school shorter day will take place on a Friday (schedule 4, 387/16).
- 3.3 Report 5/17 presented to Committee in January 2017 highlighted the progress made in planning for the changes to the secondary school week. It summarised the work that had been undertaken with all eight Angus secondary schools and approval was given for the final arrangements in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new structure of the secondary school week in August 2017.

- 3.4 A full review of the change to the secondary school week will be conducted at the end of the first full session of implementation in June 2018. The outcomes of this evaluation will be reported to Committee in September 2018. It was also requested that an interim review of the change was presented to Committee after the first two terms of implementation. The scope of this review was detailed in the Angus Annual Education Plan presented to Committee in August 2017, report 271/17. As such it was agreed to carry out a 'first impressions' review of the configuration of the secondary school week in January 2018 with an evaluation of the 33 period week model along with an evaluation of attendance and engagement in 'Angus Extra' activities planned for June 2018. As the first impressions review was conducted in November 2017 in order to be reported to Committee in January 2018, it should be noted that the information gathered relates to views from one full term of implementation of the secondary school week change.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The first impressions review focused on how young people were supported in their learning following the reconfiguration of the school week which removed daily form time. 'How Good Is Our School?' is the self-evaluation toolkit used by Angus schools for quality improvement. Chapter 2.4 of fourth edition of this document, 'Personalised Support, provides an illustration of very good practice for 'universal support'.
- 4.2 Three pupil focus groups, S1, S2 and S4, each containing eight young people, were conducted in five secondary schools. The questions asked of the young people were derived from the How Good is our School? Illustration and associated 'challenge questions' intended to support school self-evaluation. Seven of the eight Angus secondary schools have allocated one period of 'personal support'. The other school has chosen to add a 'skills' lesson. In one of the seven schools the additional 'personal support' lesson is taught by the Principal Teacher, Pupil Care and Support (PT PCS) throughout S1-6. In one of our schools the 'personal support' lesson is taught by the PT PCS throughout S4-5. In all other cases a subject teacher is allocated this task.

Young people across Angus stated that:

- Relationships with teachers varied. This depended on a number of factors including the personality of the teacher, the behaviour of young people as individuals and the behaviour of the class as a whole. Young people were able to articulate the qualities of teachers with whom they built positive working relationships.
- All young people were able to identify one key member of staff that they could talk to if they were concerned or worried. A few of the young people stated that they would choose to speak with family or friends in the first instance. In most cases the member of staff was the PT PCS. If it was not the PT PCS the young people understood that information would always be shared with the PT PCS where appropriate.
- A few of the young people could describe how to access their PT PCS should they wish to meet with them throughout the day. Some young people described how they thought this may be possible in their school but stated that they were not aware of any set 'procedure'. Some young people who had tried to access the PT PCS stated that it was difficult to know when they were available due to their teaching commitment and attendance at meetings.
- Young people in S1 were positive about the 'personal support' lesson. This weekly lesson is used to go over individual attendance, behaviour and progress. In many cases there is a citizenship element to the lesson.
- Most young people in S2 were positive about the personal support lesson. They described more variability of experience dependent upon their teacher.
- Most young people in S4 believed that the personal support lesson could be better utilised. They would welcome the opportunity for private study with individual learning conversations when appropriate. Head Teachers are aware of this feedback and working to address this in their own schools.
- All young people could describe receiving individual feedback about their progress in learning. Learning conversations, written comments in jotters, written comments on homework and interviews at parents' evening were listed. There were examples of young people being subject of an individual learning conversation in relation to their overall progress during the 'personal support' period. Other examples of this included individual meetings with PT PCS, PTs and DHTs. Overall young people stated that an individual learning conversation was the most effective form of feedback.

- Overall less than half of young people in S4 had a clear understanding of working grades and target grades. Further work is underway to address this.
 - All young people could give an example of lessons in which they were challenged in their learning. In each school individual subject areas were highlighted. All young people were also able to describe lessons in which every learner was expected to complete the same work. Most young people could give examples of 'extension' work being available in lessons.
 - Some young people have organised voluntary activities, work placements or paid employment on Friday afternoons. As part of the Developing Young Workforce senior phase offer, dedicated staff are working with Head Teachers to ensure awareness of opportunities. Fuller analysis of this will take place as part of the year one evaluation.
- 4.3 Head Teachers report only a few concerns raised by parents. These are exclusively in relation to the activities being offered on a Friday afternoon. One school is working collaboratively with a parent with a view to recruit other parents who are willing to offer activities. A small number of parental concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of available activities for young people with significant additional support needs. Active Schools Angus endeavour to make available activities as inclusive as possible and contributions from community groups are being sought. Head Teachers are yet to evaluate the quality of the 'personal support' period. The majority of Head Teachers have stated that the administration of attendance procedures and subsequent follow up of pupil absence is currently proving time consuming. Schools which have dedicated administrative staff to the monitoring of attendance appear to be dealing with this more effectively. Schools are adapting their administrative processes to monitor attendance. Good practice identified through this evaluation has been shared through head teacher collaboration.
- 4.4 Friday afternoon Active Schools 'Angus Extra' activities are being offered at all eight schools. The number of activities on offer has increased from 18 in term one to 22 in term two. Data for term two (first four weeks) also shows an increase in attendees. This includes a significant increase in female attendees. Some of the new activities on offer reflects an increased interest from community clubs; tennis in Montrose, yoga in Carnoustie and cricket in Arbroath. Angus Alive continue to offer the same programme in term two as was offered in term one. Activities are available in museums and libraries. Sports activities are available on a 'pay as you play' basis as they would be to any member of the public. Community Learning and Development (CLD) spent three months engaging in street work with young people in order to ascertain how they are spending Friday afternoons. Across the eight clusters CLD engaged with approximately 450 young people. CLD established three new youth work projects on a Friday afternoon in term two. One project has been targeted at vulnerable young people in Arbroath and the other two groups are being facilitated by parent volunteers.
- 4.5 Attendance for S1, S3 and S4 for term one in session 2016-2017 has been compared with attendance for the same groups of young people, now S2, S4 and S5, in term one of session 2017-2018. Attendance on a Friday only has also been compared. Data to date suggests that moving to the current structure of the 33 period week has not had an impact on attendance. There is no pattern emerging across our eight schools.
- 4.6 Data in relation to school meal uptake shows a decrease in the number of young people taking lunch on a Friday. There is an increase in the number of young people accessing the catering services at interval on a Friday. Young people entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) may elect to collect their meal at either interval or lunch time. There is a 13% drop on FSM uptake on a Friday in comparison to a Tuesday.
- 4.7 Data from Police Scotland shows no increase in youth calls on a Friday afternoon in comparison to the previous year.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 A full evaluation of the changes to the secondary school week will be conducted at end of session and reported to Committee in September 2018. This will include gathering pupil, parent and staff views.
- 5.2 Each school will evaluate the impact the 'personal support' lesson is having on improving outcomes for young people.

- 5.3 Each school will continue to work to ensure that attendance monitoring is effective. Data gathered to inform this interim evaluation will be shared with individual schools.
- 5.4 All services will share information to ensure that the Angus Extra programme contains details of all activities on offer for young people.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A total of 25 hours of Quality Improvement Officer time was dedicated to conducting the pupil focus groups.

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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