

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2018

FULL YEAR EVALUATION 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. A 'first impressions' review of the changes was conducted after term one, report 3/18 refers. This report provides information from a full year review of these changes. The views of young people, parents and staff together with a variety of other data is summarised.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (I) Consider the outcomes of this full year review of the changes of 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 November 2015, Committee 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 week. Parental opinion was evenly split. 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 secondary school shorter day would 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 'first impressions' review, report 3/18, presented to committee in January 2018, detailed how young people were being supported in their learning since the changes. Views of young people together with data relating to attendance and engagement in Angus 'extra' activities was gathered.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 This report provides an analysis of the data gathered at the end of the first full year of the new structure of the secondary school week. This full year evaluation focused on how young people are supported in their learning. How Good Is Our School? 4 (a self-evaluation toolkit for schools) states that effective universal personalised support is characterised by positive relationships and frequent discussion of learning and next steps with a 'key adult'. In addition, the ability for each young person to have access to a 'named person' to discuss personal issues whenever they want is seen as fundamental to ensuring wellbeing.

4.2 A variety of methods were used to gather information for this report:

- Three 'GLOW form' questionnaires were made available for young people, parents and staff. The forms were available from Wednesday 20 June to Friday 13 July 2018. The link to the questionnaires was made available via the Angus Council Twitter feed. This was retweeted regularly between these dates. The link was also available on the Angus Council Schools and Learning blog. Each secondary school advertised the link to the questionnaires via their Twitter feed and advised young people and staff via the school bulletin. Responses to each questionnaire is as follows – Young people - 353; parents - 388; staff – 351. Information from these responses is presented for Angus in this report. Information specific to each school has been provided to each secondary school.
- Five pupil focus groups were scheduled in each secondary school during the last week of term. Focus groups were arranged in same year groups of between six and eight young people and led by centrally based officers.
- An opportunity for school staff to meet with centrally based officers in each secondary school to complete the questionnaire and note any discussions.
- Face to face events during which Parental Engagement Officers spoke with parents at venues in their local community. Parental engagement officers completed the online GLOW form with parents.
- Information from Head Teachers regarding arrangements for personalised support.
- Attendance data.
- 'Angus Extra' activities data.
- Information from Police Scotland regarding reported incidents on a Friday afternoon.

4.3 Findings from the data gathered is summarised as follows:

4.3.1 Positive Relationships

Data from the pupil questionnaire showed that 15% of young people believed that they had a positive relationship with all staff who support them with their learning; 37% had a positive relationship with more than half staff; 42% had a positive relationship with half or less than half of staff and 5% of young people stated that did not have a positive relationship with any of the staff. Pupil focus groups suggested that relationships between young people and staff improved as you entered the senior phase with teachers discussing progress in learning with individual young people.

4.3.2 Support with progress in learning

Data from the pupil questionnaire showed that 76% of young people stated that they discuss their learning with a member of staff. 47% of young people stated that these conversations do not take place frequently. Pupil focus groups were able to give examples of good practice in each school but shared that this was not always consistent and that discussions or feedback did not always help young people understand what was required for them to progress in their learning. Data from the parent questionnaire showed that 80% of parents feel that there is an adult in the school who knows their child well. 67% of parents reported that they receive effective communication with regards their child's progress.

4.3.3 Access to the 'named person'

Data from the pupil questionnaire showed that 67% of young people knew how to contact their Principal Teacher of Pupil Care and Support (PT PCS) during the school day. Pupil focus groups suggested that there was not a set 'procedure' for accessing the PT PCS and this could be dependent upon an individual class teacher's response to a request from an individual pupil to seek support. Data from the parent questionnaire showed that 82% of parents know the name of the PT PCS with responsibility for supporting their child.

4.3.4 Attendance

Attendance on a Friday morning has increased from 86.6% (session 2016-2017) to 88.8% (2017-2018) for Angus overall. Overall attendance shows a decrease from 91.5% for session 2016-2017 to 90.8% for session 2017-2018.

4.3.5 Friday afternoon Angus 'Extra' Activities

Prior to the new format of the secondary school week it was unusual for activities to be offered on a Friday afternoon. The shorter day has resulted in an increase in activities offered at the end of the school day. The figures for the last four years are 112,115,123 and 154. Data from the Staff questionnaire suggests that young people who would not generally attend extra-curricular activities are attending Friday afternoon activities due to the greater emphasis on participation rather than competition. Collaboration with local sports clubs has worked well in a few areas. In contrast there has been a reduction in the number of activities being offered during the lunch break. Figures for the last four years are 180,185,173 and 127.

Data from the staff questionnaire shows that 36% of respondents were not aware of activities which are available on a Friday afternoon. A number of comments made in parent responses highlighted the lack of variety in the type of activities being offered and a lack of activity specific to young people with Additional Support Needs. The majority of young people in focus groups reported that they were not specifically aware of activities which are available on a Friday afternoon. However, in discussion almost all of the young people agreed that they knew how to find this information out in their school. When asked whether there were activities that they would welcome on a Friday afternoon a few suggestions were made, e.g. a more co-ordinated approach to work experience and volunteering opportunities. However, most young people said that they would not engage in any Friday afternoon activity.

Parents commented positively on the opportunities for young people to become involved in volunteering, arranged work experience and Duke of Edinburgh on a Friday afternoon. Parents also commented on valuing this extra time for independent study or to spend more time with their family. A few parents commented negatively about the Friday afternoon. Many of these responses were in relation to the lack of variety of activities available and the difficulty in organising childcare/their working week to accommodate the 13:20 finish. A few parents commented on the fact that young people having to access school transport meant that they could not participate in Friday afternoon activity.

Information from Police Scotland shows that in the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 there has been "no great change" in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or Youths Causing Annoyance (YCA) calls. There have been a "considerable number" of reports of vandalism between 1300 to 1700, however Police Scotland could not, at this time, provide information with regards which proportion of these reports related to young people.

4.3.6 The structure of the day

A number of comments were made with regards the timing of morning interval and the lunch break. When discussed in pupil focus groups almost all young people agreed that they would prefer the times to stay as they are. In certain schools young people believed the lunch break did not allow enough time for them to leave the school to buy lunch. Some comments were made with regards a short period of 'registration' each day, suggesting that this would facilitate communication with regards meetings, clubs etc. and allow every young person to be seen by the same adult each day.

4.3.7 Communication

Comments in both the parent and staff questionnaire suggest that communication with regards school clubs, meetings etc. is not as effective as it needs to be. 32% of respondents to the pupil questionnaire stated that the school communicate information 'not so well' or 'not at all well'. Young people in focus groups agreed that communication was not always effective but acknowledged that every school had a system for important information to be shared at particular times in the day/week during lessons and made the information available to young people via e.g. screens in public areas across the school where possible.

4.3.8 Scope of Findings

A full evaluation of how young people across Angus are being supported in their learning has never been conducted prior to this review. Whilst the data gathered for this evaluation provides useful information it should not be viewed in isolation but rather provide the basis for further exploration around key themes. Whilst this report analyses the overall Angus data, the methodology for gathering data enables data specific to each school to be analysed. This evaluation provides very useful feedback for further improving aspects of this significant structural change to the secondary school week in Angus.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Information gathered specific to each school has been provided to each Head Teacher in order that issues arising from the data may be further explored at individual school level. This will be followed up with each Head Teacher to determine what school specific action has been undertaken.
- 5.2 A schedule of on-going evaluation of personalised support, supported by staff from within the Schools and Learning team, will be agreed with Head Teachers in order to track progress in how young people are being supported in their learning and how the allocation of 'additional' time to specific subject areas is improving outcomes for young people.
- 5.3 Rigorous analysis of young people's achievement and attainment will continue to be conducted and reported to Children and Learning Committee in line with INSIGHT data update periods.
- 5.4 The programme for a Friday afternoon will be expanded to include further volunteering opportunities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

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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