13 February 2012

Dear Ms Peat

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1409

Please find attached the response from Aberdeen City Council to the question posed by the Committee concerning this petition. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries about our response.

Yours sincerely

David Leng
Head of Schools and Education Establishments
PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1409
QUESTIONS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2011

Local Authorities—

• What are your views on the issues raised in the petition and the Committee’s subsequent discussion?

We welcome a national focus on the issues to do with training and capacity building. There have been a number of changes and there is a number of factors that mean that this important issue does merit substantial consideration at both a national and local level. Those changes/factors include greater incidence of conditions such as autism, co-morbid factors; positive developments such as approaches to inclusion within mainstream schools; services to support children with mental health additional needs; as well as changing resourcing issues. In Aberdeen City Council we are undertaking a major review of inclusion and a key work stream is capacity building and training.

• Does your local authority provide continuous professional development (CPD) for teaching staff in additional support needs? If not, what are the reasons for this and are there any plans to look at this again?

We provide a range of types of training on additional support needs for staff in our schools, aimed at supporting staff who work with children and young people with physical disabilities as well as those with learning disabilities. Recent inputs on learning disabilities have covered topics including:

  o The use of technology and software to support children with learning difficulties (e.g. interactive whiteboards, Clicker software)
  o Autism (an introductory course and a more advanced course)
  o Using high interest/low ability fiction and non-fiction books
  o Health and wellbeing (mental/social/emotional) for pupils with additional support needs
  o Positive behaviour management (including solution oriented approaches and restorative practice)

In addition to a programme of face to face courses, we encourage staff to share practice widely, and to facilitate this we provide opportunities for staff to be released from their teaching commitments to visit colleagues in other schools and services. For example, one teacher from a primary school was able to spend a day shadowing a teacher in our autism outreach service, to gain a better understanding of autism and how to support children on the spectrum.

All of these professional development opportunities are voluntary at present; there is no requirement for mainstream teachers to undertake specific training in supporting pupils with learning disabilities.

We are however currently undergoing a major review of inclusion within the local authority and our training provision, including the content of programmes and methods of delivery, will be reviewed in detail as part of this work.
The educational psychology service provides strategic advice to the CPD team as well as delivering direct training to teachers, education staff and partners in other services and agencies. Teachers and schools can receive input on in-service days, twilight sessions and at other times, upon request and with advance notice. Training can be contextual and specific to the additional support need and need not necessarily be dependent on a diagnosis, to address need. Getting It Right For Every Child increasingly signals the need for shared training and understanding of support requirements.

- **What support or training does your authority provide to non-teaching staff (for example, janitors, caretakers or catering staff) to help them deal with pupils who have additional support needs?**

  We have recently introduced a new programme of professional development for pupil support assistants, which includes face to face sessions covering topics such as:

  - Solution Oriented Approaches
  - Autism
  - Aspergers
  - Behaviour Management

  We do not currently provide training specifically on working with children with learning disabilities for any other members of support staff in schools. However, this situation may change as a result of our review of inclusion training over the coming months.

Educational psychology provides training for pupil support assistants and other support staff including, catering / janitorial if there is a perceived need.

For example there may be particular set of circumstances around start of day / entry to school, or how the pupil is managed in the dining area.

Solution Oriented Approaches and Video Interaction Guidance are two strategies that have been used with both teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as parent/carers and pupils.