

West Lothian Council

Scottish Government response to ASL Review 2023.

The Committee is specifically seeking a response to the following questions. West Lothian Council has completed a consultation across the Head teacher body to ensure school practices are reflected in its response.

- details on what parts of Additional Support for Learning provision are working well and what are not, and any reasons they can provide which might help to explain why aspects are working well or not.

West Lothian Council has an unwavering commitment to inclusive practices which is evident across educational establishments. This commitment prioritises diverse learner needs and is showcased through practical initiatives. There is a strong commitment to fostering an inclusive learning community which goes beyond theory, leading to practical solutions addressing the unique challenges faced by learners requiring additional support. West Lothian has strong established approaches to GIRFEC assessment and planning. Alongside established approach to staged intervention “Continuum of Support” which has been recently updated to reflect the multi-agency approaches.

The presumption of mainstream sits as a central pillar to West Lothians approach to supporting learners in their local communities. Over the last 3 years our schools embody this message and are using a system change approach in managing the changing profiles of pupils following the impact of covid.

Collaborative transition strategies, such as West Lothian’s transition process Cluster Assessment for Support and Transition (CAST) meetings, demonstrate a proactive approach to addressing specific needs during critical transitional phases. Established clear and structured processes for children with ASN ensuring a smooth transition and continuity with support discussions starting at the earliest opportunity with a key parental engagement strategy built into the process which has seen a reduction in conflict of placement.

Supporting practitioners at all levels ensures we are able to support the school system through a variety of CLPL. Involvement of specialist staff, including Educational Psychologists, supports all staff through consultation and training initiatives (e.g. ASN bitesize CLPL, targeted coaching and mentoring). This builds the capacity of educators to cater for the diverse learning needs. There is a pivotal role for dedicated support staff, such as PSWs working with vulnerable children, enhancing the overall effectiveness of ASL initiatives.

Collaboration with partners, targeted interventions are contributing the maintaining and supporting access for learners in their locality schools. Young people exhibit acceptance of differences, nurturing targeted pupils, and a whole-school focus on inclusive pedagogy. Enhanced by the use of digital technology where possible, inclusive classroom design, and whole-school commitments to inclusive pedagogy

enhances the learning environment. There remain effective provisions and strategies in place to create a comprehensive and adaptable support system.

- What are the barriers to supporting this provision?

Area requiring continued improvement:

Staffing challenges, remain a key area of concern to manage the increasing needs across schools in West Lothian. This includes the need for an enhanced skilled workforce to support learners displaying dysregulated behaviours. This requires to be practical advice and support through an intensive coaching and mentoring models which requires a national approach to ring fenced funding streams, including continued value placed in developing the workforce.

The dynamic change in cohorts and increasing numbers of learners are being supported by schools and local authorities through creative approaches within school contexts. However, this flexible approach is scrutinised through Additional Support Needs tribunal processes for pupil placement. There are large amounts of resource being placed within the tribunal processes at local authority and government level which would benefit pupils further should a solution focussed approach around parental engagement be deployed in this process rather than the current litigious approach. Consideration of a formal quality assurance process around placement may be a more appropriate monitoring arrangement.

To pay recognition to the increasing and changing additional support needs across Scotland, there requires to be consideration given to the adapting and extending measurements of attainment. There is a need for a fair and inclusive way to measure success that celebrates added value and is reflective of current cohorts of learners.

- any examples of good practice in this area;

West Lothian Council prides itself on its newly developed Transition CAST process and its Inclusion Support Strategic planning which is developed to support the school system through a change model with Inclusion at the centre of the planning process. The local authority has also invested in the creation of an Interrupted Learner Service which works in partnership with CAMHs and Social Policy to support our hardest to reach pupils who have are unable to engage in the school system post covid. This team also supports all Secondary Schools and targeted primary schools with a focussed and strategic approach to improving attendance.

- how does the authority support good relationships with parents and young people, especially where there are disagreements around the provision of additional support for learning and reach collaborative agreement

All West Lothian Schools have an emphasis on open, transparent, and compassionate communication. This takes place through regular check-in phone calls, open sessions, and an open-door policy contributing to an approachable and supportive environment.

School staff take the time to build relationships and using Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approaches fosters trust and respect. Sharing information transparently during transition stages strengthens relationships, ensuring clarity about the needs and agreed-upon interventions. An identified key worker system is in place,

ensuring a consistent point of contact. Parent Focus Sessions, facilitated monthly by Development Officers for Early Years (EY) and Additional Support Needs (ASN), provide valuable opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage and stay informed. Regular opportunities for parents to be in school, building relationships and experiencing learning, contribute to a strong, positive school-home connection.

- How many placing requests have been made over the last 5 years by parents or carers wishing that their children be educated in a specialist Additional Support Needs (ASN) unit or school. And how many placing requests have been made by parents or carers wishing their children to be educated in a mainstream setting as opposed to a specialist ASN setting. The Committee would be grateful for the total numbers, along with the numbers of requests refused and agreed.

Educational Placement Group(EPG) (Internal)

Academic Session 2018-2019 – 119 PRs (31 Granted)

Academic Session 2019-2020 – 88 PRS (38 Granted)

Academic Session 2020-2021 – 95 PRs (9 Granted)

Academic Session 2021-2022 – 107 PRs (17 Granted)

Academic Session 2022-2023 – 83 PRs (18 Granted)

This group processes all Additional Support Needs placements including the parental placing requests and those identified through CAST process.

Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) (External)

Academic Session 2018-2019 – 2 PRs (0 Granted)

Academic Session 2019-2020 – 3 PRs (0 Granted)

Academic Session 2020-2021 – 12 PRs (3 Granted)

Academic Session 2021-2022 – 18 PRs (1 Granted)

Academic Session 2022-2023 – 2 PRs (0 Granted)

This group reviews placing requests for out of authority schools.

- How does the authority ensure that parents and young people are aware of the rights to various remedies under the 2004 Act?

This process is shared through letter at point of outcome of parental placing request. This information is also readily available online. Schools staff are able to access and signpost parents effectively to online resource or third sector advocacy partners who are available to support parents.

- The Committee is aware that there can be variations in approaches to identification of ASN across local authorities and between primary and secondary schools. The Committee would be grateful if you could briefly set out how you ensure that children's additional support needs are identified and Seemis records are updated to ensure accuracy of the data.

West Lothian has a robust GIRFEC approach to the identification of needs across all sectors. The usage of Assessment of Wellbeing, Child Planning, Co-ordinated Support and Health care plans are evident across all schools which minimise the process of the identification of barriers to learning irrespective of diagnostic to ensure learners needs are met without delay. Upon diagnostic formal letters are received at school level and SEEMIS records are updated accordingly. This is quality assured twice a year at school level and once a year at authority level. ASN Data is reviewed by enhanced approaches to the usage of ASN Planning Tools. Secondary schools utilise data through Power Bi platform which feeds live data from SEEMIS for analysis regularly.

- How does the authority ensure staff have adequate training on Additional Support for Learning provision?

West Lothian Council provides a wide range of learning opportunities for practitioners at all levels. Including offering bespoke CLPL by the Additional Support Needs (ASN) team to address specific needs. Collaborative training approaches across services including ASN, Educational Psychology and Inclusion Support. Use of coaching and mentoring modules, and shadowing ASN colleagues to build capacity and skillsets in mainstream.

A universal offer through the ASN and Educational Psychology Sharepoint sites which contain over 200 modules for supporting all learners. This area continues to be developed and refreshed based on needs identified. This also includes the deployment of two compulsory training modules to support all school based staff:

- Positive Approaches to Behaviour (Children & Young People)
- Safer De-Escalation (Children & Young People)

Regular quality assurance of modules and training is undertaken and updates shared through email communications and through West Lothian's annual Support and Inclusion conference.

Staff are also able to identifying training needs through Professional Review and Development (PRD) and Assessment and Review of Development (ARD). This ensures a personalised and responsive approach to individual needs being identified to allow for ongoing professional development to be supported by the school and local authority system. Leading to the allocation of professional development time for staff to ensure that theoretical knowledge is effectively applied in practice.

- If parents/carers have a concern about the ASN provision in a mainstream school, what process can they follow to try and get it resolved?

All parents have access to school communications to link with appropriate staff at school level who are able to assist with any queries. Should a parent wish to escalate for further specialist support direct links can be made with health care and third sector partners. Schools will also refer for an Additional Support Needs Officer to attend Child's Planning Meeting for consultation to support school further. West Lothian also have a clear complaints procedure for parents to escalate concerns which will be directed to appropriate ASN officers to make contact with the parent to resolve. Should a parent wish for mediation following a pupil placement request refusal an independent mediation service is available to support discussions between parent and the local authority. Within West Lothian Council we apply a solution focussed approach to ensuring positive outcomes for all our learners.

- Where the provision of ASN is not working in specific cases in schools, what can teachers do about that? Is there support that can be accessed? What happens if the matter cannot be resolved?

Senior leaders prioritise listening to staff, providing restorative opportunities and time for reflection. Consistent reporting of concerns and seeking support from professionals and partners contribute to a supportive environment. Senior leaders make themselves available, maintaining a consistent approach across the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Updates on progress, recognition of effort, and challenging staff perceptions with honesty are integral components. This collaborative approach fosters a unified understanding of goals and expectations.

Resolving differences by establishing clear planned outcomes and directing staff to CLPL and training. Helping staff develop a shared approach and understanding, particularly regarding the presumption of mainstream. Clear outlined reporting procedures are in place across West Lothian to ensure that staff are able to raise concerns in all areas of Education including ASN concerns.