

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 20th DECEMBER 2004

REPORT ON: APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL SUPPORT WORKERS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 839-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report gives feedback on the successful evaluation of the pilot appointment of non-teaching School Support Workers (SSW) in certain secondary schools, and as a result now seeks approval to proceed to establish these posts in all secondary schools in the city.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to:

- i. note the contents of this report;
- ii. instruct the Director of Education to continue to monitor these appointments, in the context of the management of pupil behaviour; and
- iii. remit to the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to take proposals to the Personnel Committee to establish the School Support Worker posts as outlined in paragraph 8.1 below.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of making these appointments will continue to be met from the monies allocated by the Scottish Executive to support the recommendations of its Discipline Task Group, and thereafter will be incorporated into the Education Department's revenue budget. School Support Workers will be paid at rate GS2 (£12789 - £13416), working term time only. The cost of this cross-city initiative will be £64,077 in financial year 2004-05, rising to £277,169 in a full financial year (employer's costs included).

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This proposal is designed to ensure that the department makes efficient use of available resources and meets local needs in providing an effective education service for all. The proposal will support the development of positive discipline in all areas of Dundee, and will enable schools to become safer and more secure learning communities.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Implementation of this report will assist the smooth delivery of the education service in secondary schools, and give all pupils access to it.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 In June 2001 the Better Behaviour Better Learning report of the Discipline Task Group was published. It contained a number of recommendations among which were several that encouraged the appointment and deployment of additional support or auxiliary staff in schools.
- 6.2 The Education Committee in its report of 17th May 2004 (365-2004) authorised the launch of a pilot project to establish temporary School Support Worker posts in four of Dundee's secondary schools, with a remit to assist the school under the broad headings of contributing to a positive ethos, managing pupil indiscipline, making contacts with parents/carers and local members of the school community, and effectively organising the recording and reporting of incidents and activities.
- 6.3 These posts were originally due to begin in August with the pilot ending in October. Delays in recruiting applicants who had the necessary skills and relevant experience meant that post holders were not appointed until September, and in only three schools (Baldragon Academy, Braeview Academy and Craigie High School).
- 6.4 The post holders received centrally provided training and also underwent a period of on-the-job orientation before fully taking up their duties.

7.0 CURRENT SITUATION

- 7.1 The pilot has run from September to December 2004. All three schools report that the project has met with success. They variously report:
- the establishment of positive relationships between School Support Workers and pupils;
 - positive and welcome acceptance by teaching staff of School Support Workers;
 - acceptance of the School Support Worker as a member of the school staff by pupils, parents/carers and other members of staff;
 - reduction in school senior managers' time taken during the initial phases of the investigation of incidents;
 - a reduction in pupils found wandering around school premises during teaching time;
 - a consequent reduction in disruption caused to staff and pupils during the teaching day;
 - an anecdotal reduction in nuisance to local residents and shopkeepers where this had existed; and
 - reduction in acts of vandalism.
- 7.2 Through the pilot lessons have been learned with regard to the establishment of in-house training programmes and support for newly appointed School Support Workers during a defined settling-in period. There is an acceptance of the need for continuing personal and professional development for the post holders.

7.3 For their part, School Support Workers report good relationships with pupils, staff and school management. In one school the post holder had prepared papers for the senior management team on aspects of school security and on the effective storage of lost property. This individual contribution could have benefits for all schools in Dundee and is an example of the valuable nature of the post.

8.0 PROPOSALS

8.1 It is now proposed that the Education Department should proceed without delay to make similar appointments in all its secondary schools. The intention is still to appoint two workers in each school, ideally one male and one female, but the ratio should be kept under review to take account of the differing needs of schools as they become apparent.

8.2 It is also proposed that discussions continue with all relevant parties to ensure that School Support Workers are given all necessary support to enable them to carry out what has been shown to be a necessary and valuable role.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Depute Chief Executive (Finance). Consultation has also taken place with School Support Workers, teaching staff and teacher trade unions.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

ANNE WILSON
Director of Education

6th December 2004

JC/DD