



# West Lothian Council

## EDUCATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### MULTI FAITH SCHOOLS

#### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

#### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider further a proposal discussed by the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for strengthening the multi-faith identity of schools, especially secondary schools, building on Scotland's strong Christian traditions and promoting the understanding and acceptance of other faiths and beliefs.

#### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

1. To form a Working Group with a remit and membership as set out in the report below in order to produce proposals for further consideration by the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.
2. To appoint the Chair of the Working Group.
3. To identify the Lead Officer of the Working Group.
4. To authorise the Clerk to make and publish the necessary changes to the Scheme of Administration as a result of the establishment of the Working Group.

#### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers needs Providing equality of opportunity Working in partnership
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Education (Scotland) Act 1980 SEED Circular 1/2005 – Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools Equality Act 2006 Guidance to Education Authorities and Schools

	on the Equality Act 2006
	West Lothian Council Equalities Policies
<b>III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	Within existing budgets
<b>IV Consultations</b>	Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

#### **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

The Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel considered a proposal by the Rev Dr Anderson to strengthen the multi-faith identity of schools, especially secondary schools, at its meeting of 8 January 2008.

The Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Education Executive form a Working Group to examine this proposal in more detail.

The proposal by Rev Dr Anderson requires to be set within the existing statutory, policy and educational framework. It is therefore suggested that the Working Group have the following remit:-

“To examine the possibility of strengthening the multi-faith identity of schools, especially secondary schools, having regard to:-

- The proposal by Rev Dr Anderson, as set out in his discussion paper
- Existing practice within West Lothian, including the work of the Chaplaincy Group
- Best practice in other authorities
- The report of the national Religious Observance Review Group (2004)
- Scottish Executive Education Department Circular 1/2005 on religious observance
- Legislation, HMIE guidance and Council policy in relation to diversity and equality
- Guidance to Education Authorities and Schools on the Equality Act 2006
- The existing framework within which education is delivered, including A Curriculum for Excellence”

The Rev Dr Anderson, in his paper, sets out the historical and current contribution of Christianity to the education system in Scotland and the positive outcomes achieved by faith schools. The paper sets out the contribution of Christianity to values prevalent within our society, and to encouraging personal morality and social responsibility. It suggests that more effective recognition of Christian festivals, history and role models, study of the influence of Christianity in society and public life, and experience of worship would make a positive contribution to the ethos of schools, whilst proportionate place should be given to other faiths.

Current practice on religious observance within West Lothian schools is being driven forward by the Chaplaincy Group, a joint initiative between West Lothian Council and the West Lothian Presbytery, which aims to promote and improve opportunities for religious observance.

The report of the Religious Observance Review Group is the most comprehensive and recent examination of religious observance in schools in Scotland. The remit of the Group was “to review current guidance on arrangements for religious observance in schools taking account of the views of interested bodies and individuals including religious organisations, teachers, parents and pupils; to make recommendations to Ministers on any changes which are required to ensure that revised guidance to schools is relevant and appropriate for pupils, that it fulfils the requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and also provides practical advice on religious observance.”

Scottish Executive Education Department Circular 1/2005 sets out current Scottish Government policy on the provision of religious observance in Scottish schools and sets out action for local authorities in planning the provision of religious observance. Religious observance is defined as “community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.” The Circular stresses that “religious observance needs to be developed in a way which reflects and understands [...] diversity. It should be sensitive to our traditions and origins and should seek to reflect these but it must equally be sensitive to individual spiritual needs and beliefs, whether these come from a faith or non-faith perspective.”

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which repeats legislation of previous acts dating back to 1872, imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to provide religious education in Scottish schools.

Her Majesty’s inspectorate of Education, in its quality frameworks for schools and for education authorities places a strong expectation on schools and authorities that there will be an ethos and practice of inclusion, equality and fairness throughout all aspects of the work of the school and authority at all levels. West Lothian Council has adopted policies to ensure that its statutory duties to promote equality are delivered.

The Equality Act 2006 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief) when goods, facilities and services are being provided. Guidance to Education Authorities and Schools on the Equality Act 2006 provides further guidance on religious observance in light of that act.

The 3-18 Curriculum (A Curriculum for Excellence) is being developed within all West Lothian schools. The Curriculum for excellence aims to ensure that all young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Confident individuals are defined as having self respect, a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, secure values and beliefs and ambition. Responsible citizens will have respect for others and a commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life. The proposal by the Rev Dr Anderson can therefore be seen to be consistent with and a contribution to delivery of a Curriculum for Excellence.

It is suggested that the Working Group have the following membership:-

- 2 elected members (with one to Chair the group)
- 3 religious representatives
- 1 primary Headteacher and 1 secondary Headteacher
- 1 or more parent representatives, selected by the Parent Council Representative's Meeting
- Appropriate officers from Education and Cultural Services
- Other representatives, reflecting the religious diversity within West Lothian, to be invited by the working group

It is suggested that the working group make proposals for further consideration by the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, which would then be subject to wider consultation.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

The proposal by Rev Dr Anderson should be examined and developed further in light of the existing statutory framework, best practice locally and nationally, Council policy and national guidance and A Curriculum for Excellence.

This should be done by a working group with the remit and membership suggested within this report.

#### **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Multi Faith Schools – A Discussion Paper by Rev Dr Robert Anderson

The Report of the Religious Observance Review Group  
( <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/25954/0023749.pdf> )

SEED Circular 1/2005 – Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools  
( <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0023554.pdf> )

Guidance to Education Authorities and Schools on the Equality Act 2006  
( <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/194783/0052319.pdf> )

West Lothian Council Equalities Policies  
( [http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/Council\\_and\\_government/751/](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/Council_and_government/751/) )

Appendices/Attachments: None

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