

Appendix 11 Blackness Primary School Focus Groups Feedback

Deborah Davidson (Head of Education (ELC, ASN & Primary)) and I [Jon Reid] visited Blackness Primary School on Wednesday 30 October to meet with all the pupils in Blackness Primary School.

The main aim of this meeting was to gather the views of the young people, in a familiar face-to-face setting, as part of the consultation process. This was in addition to the standard format of gathering their views via a paper-based questionnaire.

Parents knew that this was taking place, and they all received a reminder of this, via ClassDojo, on 29 October ("to meet with and listen to the pupils").

We were keen to hear their opinions about Blackness Primary School, reassure them that no decision had been made, that their views were important and that we would feed these back into the report which would be written. We reassured the pupils that there were no right or wrong answers and that there was no need to feel worried about our discussions.

Following an introduction and some conversation (about their October holidays) in the classroom, we met with the pupils in two small groups. Both myself and Deborah had previously visited the school (unconnected to the consultation) and so the pupils already knew who we were. The Headteacher had also previously explained the role that we both have in the Council.

The first group consisted of 4 x Primary 1 and 4 x Primary 2. Without being prompted, several of the pupils told us that "they would be going to school in Winchburgh" and several indicated that they would be going to Grange Primary. We immediately changed the subject and reassured them that we were not there to talk about that as Blackness Primary School may not even close.

5 pupils indicated that they travel to school on the bus, 1 walks with a sibling and 2 (who live in Bo'ness) are driven by car. They indicated that the bus was "good fun".

6 pupils indicated that they had friends who went to other schools and they "liked it" as it was "good fun".

The pupils indicated that they liked their friends at Blackness (although they also had friends at other places) and that they liked learning Maths and learning about numbers, this was in response to a question around "a good thing at Blackness PS".

Several of the pupils indicated that they "wanted more writing".

The pupils were asked what they were really proud of/achievements: this ranged from swimming (out of school); getting badges (in and out of school); dancing and when the P2s run with the other P2s.

Seven of the pupils indicated that they took part in activities out with Blackness PS - this included swimming, rugby and shooting.

They indicated that they mainly worked by themselves in class.

The pupils were asked that, if Blackness PS, was to close - what they would be most worried about? They indicated that they "would miss it"; "being split up from friends" but also indicated that they would "still see their friends".

The children indicated that it would be both sad and exciting, that they would still see their friends and that they would be able to make new friends, and that they make new friends easily in places like the park and at a restaurant.

The children did not appear to be anxious or worried at all - and they were constantly reassured throughout the conversation. They were very conversant and chatty, and could have talked all day!

They were thanked for their input and taken back to class.

The second group consisted of 8 x P3-P5 pupils (2 x P3; 3 x P4 and 3 x P5). They were accompanied in the group by a Support for Learning Assistant to help support a child with ASN.

6 pupils normally get the bus (although 2 have recently started cycling), 1 walks to school and 1 is driven by car. 1 pupil lives outwith the Falkirk Council area.

The pupils gave a range of responses when asked what was good at Blackness, including: "lots of Art together as a whole class"; "Maths"; "helping the community with beach cleans and litter picks during the school day"; "get to play after doing some work"; "using the iPads"; "get to do beach cleans and most schools don't get to do that".

1 pupil had written statements about what was good about Bo'nness; which contained a repeat of the points made by her parent at the Public Meeting, including: "we are family, not friends"; "help community with litter picks and soup packs"; "Grange is overcrowded" and "why can't more pupils come to Blackness".

Pupils indicated that they liked it when the whole school went on school trips together, to the Highland Show, Five Sisters Zoo and the Panto.

Pupils indicated that they sometimes worked with other people doing Big Maths and the whole class does Maths at the same time, but sometimes the P1s and P2s would go to a different room by themselves.

Pupils were proud of achieving levels in Big Maths, being Star of the Week or getting to be at the Golden Table.

The pupils indicated that they were part of clubs outwith Blackness PS, with pupils from Kinneil, Grange and Bo'ness Public Schools. This included activities such as cheerleading; football; riding, swimming; shooting and the P4s and P5s football after school on Thursdays (with pupils from other schools).

The pupils indicated that when they finished Primary School they may go to Bo'ness Academy or Winchburgh Academy.

When asked if they were worried about Blackness PS closing, they said they didn't want it to close and they would not get to see their friends as they may want to go to other schools other than Grange PS.

They said if they had to change schools they would be worried about bullies; they would miss the staff and that there would be some people older than them at their new school.

One pupil indicated that it would be too noisy but was able to talk through that he would be able to ask the teacher to help him.

When the pupils were asked what would be different at a new school, they indicated that there would be more people and they would have more friends.

The pupils clearly expressed a view that they did not want Blackness to close, but were able to talk through their concerns with solutions.

The pupils were thanked for their input; reassured that no decision has been taken; that their views were important and that their contributions were important and valuable.