

ITEM No ...4.....

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 26 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT ON: PROGRESS REPORT ON ASPIRE DUNDEE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 404-2015

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Education Committee with an update on the progress of the ASPIRE Dundee Project.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- note the progress of the ASPIRE Dundee Project; and
 - instruct the Executive Director of Children and Families Service to bring back a progress in April 2016.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 ASPIRE Dundee is an ambitious project working with approximately 2,500 children in eleven primary school communities using the performing arts of dance, music and drama in a creative and immersive manner across and beyond the school curriculum. The aim is to increase and develop pupils' attainment; achievement; health and wellbeing; self-confidence; self-esteem and learning whilst challenging inequalities. ASPIRE Dundee was officially launched at Dundee Rep Theatre in November 2013 by Shona Robison MSP.

4.2 The following schools are involved in the ASPIRE project:

School	Art Form	Start of Project
St Vincent's RC Primary	Dance	November 2013
Rowantree Primary	Dance	November 2013
St Luke's & St Matthew's RC Primary	Drama	January 2014
Ballumbie and Ballumbie Early Years Centre	Drama	January 2014
Longhaugh Primary and Nursery	Drama	January 2014
Camperdown Primary	Music	April 2014
St Clement's RC Primary	Music	April 2014
Sidlaw View Primary	Music	April 2014
Rosebank Primary	Music	April 2014
Claypotts Castle Primary and Claypotts Castle Early Years Centre	Dance	March 2015
St Pius RC Primary	Dance	March 2015
Dens Road Primary	Drama	March 2016
Ardler Primary	Music	March 2016

5.0 MAIN TEXT

5.1 The ASPIRE Dundee Project is designed to raise attainment, achievement and aspiration through active participation in the arts. The delivery model is set within schools and local communities using a multi-partnership approach to promote participation by children, school staff and families. ASPIRE Dundee has increased professional dialogue and introduced robust levels of challenge for all stakeholders. In order to tackle the equality issues in Dundee, the ASPIRE team members work together with schools and key partners to plan and deliver quality pupil experiences. The planning model and the intended outcomes make specific reference to Dundee City Council's Single Outcome Agreement, the Education Service Plan, the Dundee Cultural Strategy and the Integrated Children's Service Plan. The stated aims are:

- **To transform children's lives using performing arts.**
- **To empower and strengthen communities.**
- **To focus on school communities in most need in areas of deprivation.**

5.2 Extensive research has been undertaken into the 'Transformative Power of the Arts'. Arts learning experiences play a vital role in developing critical thinking skills, creativity, imagination and innovation. These capacities are increasingly recognised as the core skills pupils need as part of a high quality and relevant 21st century educational experience. Arts programmes help to develop high levels of motivation, enthusiasm and self confidence. They instil self esteem, develop team working, encourage social integration, raise attainment and drive achievement. Participants learn to think bigger and more creatively, developing through the process a desire to succeed and progress to the world of work. The intention is that pupils who participate in the ASPIRE project are successful in achieving short, medium and long-term goals and have significantly raised aspirations.

Guiding Principles

5.3 Our guiding principles are based on the fundamental need to improve the life chances of children, young people and families by:

- Placing the Getting It Right For Every Child philosophy at the heart of everything we do.
- Enabling all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- Creating a caring, successful environment for learning which promotes well-being and a sense of mutual respect.
- Recognising and meeting the unique and different learning needs of all learners.
- Listening to and acting upon the voice and views of children and young people.
- Promoting high quality and effective partnership working.
- Providing all staff with high quality training opportunities to ensure that we have a workforce of reflective, evaluative and highly skilled practitioners.

5.4 In the planning of the ASPIRE Dundee programme, account was taken of national policy developments including:

- The Early Years Framework.
- A Curriculum for Excellence.
- Building a Fairer Scotland and Tackling Equality.
- Building the Ambition.
- Equally Well.

5.5 In developing our proposal we set out the following criteria to underpin the project:

- It has to respond to the socio-economic context of the City;
- It has to demonstrate value for money;

- It has to address sustainability;
- It has to demonstrate integration between school, community and the cultural sector;
- It has to be neighbourhood focused;
- It has to be supported by a raft of cultural partners; and
- It has to prioritise inclusion and engagement of those who stand to benefit most.

5.6 The Dundee Context

The effects of child poverty cannot be understated. Experiencing child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children. By the age of five, children in poverty are regularly between ten and thirteen months behind their peers from more affluent backgrounds in terms of educational attainment. Children in the most deprived areas of Dundee have significantly worse health compared to children in the least deprived areas, including dental health and obesity rates. Information from the Community Profiles gives the following facts about Dundee:

- There are 23,704 children under 15 and 8,261 children under 4.
- There are 6,530 lone parent households in Dundee (5629 are lone mothers and 509 are lone fathers).
- There are 459 young mothers aged under 19.
- 8,941 people in Dundee reported their health as bad or very bad – this includes physical and mental health, including ‘parenting stress’.

5.7 Targeted Populations

The data from across the city confirms the widespread issue of deprivation in Dundee and the number of schools who have over 50% of pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 & 2. When analysing the data further, the percentage of children across the city in SIMD 1 & 2 is also widespread. In addition to this data, we have analysed the data for a range of other factors including attendance figures, clothing grant uptake, Free Meal Entitlement from P4-7, and assessment information in Reading and Maths.

6.0 EVALUATION

6.1 Evaluation of ASPIRE Dundee has been carried out by the University of Dundee, the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education.

6.2 Methodology for the evaluation of ASPIRE has been a mixed methods approach incorporating several data collection techniques. The different data collections were designed to enable triangulation in the analysis of data from the following sources:

- Observations;
- Focus group interviews from each participating primary school;
- Focus group interviews with all stakeholders (parents, staff, pupils, community, tutors);
- Case studies;
- Video evidence (Big Brother Tent); and
- Questionnaires to parents, teaching staff and tutors.

7.0 MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 ASPIRE Dundee has been successful in engaging with 2,500 children. There is strong evidence that children involved in the ASPIRE Dundee experience benefits primarily around personal and social development, for example, through improved confidence levels, raised self-esteem, more developed social skills and the increased ability to concentrate.

7.2 The project has allowed parents to see a more positive, aspirational future for their children and has engendered a sense of pride in what they have and will go on to achieve in their lives. Parents and teachers report that the ‘positivity’ that surrounds ASPIRE Dundee is beneficial for engendering better, positive relationships between parents and school. The evaluation team confirmed that ASPIRE Dundee is having a positive impact on children’s

learning and that working more closely with schools to develop ways of measuring this impact is important.

- 7.3 The ASPIRE Dundee Project has built strong strategic partnership arrangements with a number of agencies with the result being good buy-in and excellent partnership working. The strategic partnerships that ASPIRE Dundee has developed has helped to promote excellence and a high profile of the Project which has sparked interest from other authorities such as North Ayrshire, Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross who are now looking to adopt a similar model.

8.0 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT TO DATE

- 8.1 In terms of positive outcomes and impact, pupils who took part in the research were very positive about their involvement in the project and the impact of participation. Pupils highlighted the following positive outcomes:

- increased engagement in learning;
- improved and developing listening skills;
- improved concentration;
- improved self-confidence;
- improved attendance at school;
- reduced exclusions (all schools);
- improved relationships between pupils;
- improved motivation and determination;
- improved communication skills; and
- improved ability to achieve goals and meet challenges.

- 8.2 Teachers who took part in the research made the following comments:

- the high quality training increased and improved their skills and knowledge in the performing arts. This built the capacity required for the successful and continued sustainability of the programme.
- the activities being planned and delivered improved relationships with pupils.
- there was increased partnership working with other agencies.
- the performing arts are a powerful tool for learning and social development.
- the project improved relationships with parents and carers.
- The activities provided enhanced opportunities for inter-disciplinary(cross curricular) learning.

9.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

10.0 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

MICHAEL WOOD
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

October 2015