

Lecture Notes

'Calderwood Lodge: The Present and The Future'

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Introduction

Thank you for your warm welcome and Mr Chairman thank you for your kind introduction. It is a great honour to be here to speak at this, the first of several planned lectures. I'll begin by providing a little background about myself and some insight into my time at Calderwood before going on to raise some issues which I believe are important and which you may consider worthy of further discussion.

My Background

1. In 1976 The Eagles greatest hits album went platinum [first ever], Abba had Mama Mia, Dancing Queen and Fernando in the charts and Punk took over from Flower power, Harold Wilson resigned as Prime Minister and Israeli commandos rescued 100 hostages at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. Amidst this background of world events I emerged as a fresh- faced, enthusiastic new recruit to the teaching profession complete with platform shoes, big hair and impossibly wide flared trousers.
2. Class teacher in 2 schools
3. Staff tutor in Expressive Arts based at Glasgow Arts Centre – visiting denominational and non-denominational schools throughout Glasgow developing staff in music, working with children in Music and Drama and organising in-service at the Arts Centre
4. HT of St James's Paisley which joined Mossvale primary to become Renfrewshire's first and very effective shared campus school – interesting that when shared campus schools are being discussed Mossvale St James's is never mentioned as a successful twinning.
5. HT of St Joseph's, Busby which at the time was the most complained about school in Renfrew division and now St Cadoc's with just under 600 pupils which when I took over 4 years ago – you've guessed it...was the most complained about school in East Renfrewshire–
6. Seconded to Calderwood Lodge March 15th '06

Also

1. As a young HT I was part of a trio of HT's who organised and delivered staff development for heads in providing a public service – an interesting task since many of the older, more traditional heads were of the opinion that like the children, parents should be seen but not heard.
2. Tutored on Strathclyde's HT management modules for improving school effectiveness
3. Presently delivering leadership professional development for aspiring school managers within East Renfrewshire Council
4. Field assessor for candidates involved in the Scottish Qualification for Headship

5. Lectured on behalf of East Ren. on aspects of the Scottish Ed System and East Renfrewshire Council perspective on evaluation to European educationalists in Ostend
6. Have provided regular school management input to Strathclyde, Glasgow and the Open University courses
7. Studied with several institutions including the Open University where I took part in awareness raising TV programmes to promote the University and in Radio discussions about language and reading development

Qualification [in addition to my initial teaching qualification]

Very interested in the idea of lifelong learning [and I believe that my secondment to Calderwood is part of this]

- Doctorate in Education from Strathclyde University [The influence of self evaluation on school effectiveness]national and international education and a visit to Dublin to look at the Ed system.
- MA in Education [Management]
- BA [OU summer schools in Bath, Oxford, Nottingham]
- Advanced diploma in Educational management
- Diploma in Reading Development
- CMLS
- And for balance I'm also a qualified orienteering instructor

Personal

Married to Eileen who is DHT in a Glasgow school. Son Jim 23 is a Lawyer, currently completing his Masters Degree at Toronto University. Son Paul graduates as a teacher from Glasgow University this summer and daughter Grainne is 11 and in P7 at St Cadoc's.

Leisure – semi- pro entertainer from a young age – provided the entertainment for many Barmitzvah's in the late 80s early 90's

General

I'm a first generation Scot from Irish Immigrant parents and feel that because of this I have some appreciation of the dilemma faced by members of this community - how society can intentionally and unintentionally marginalize those who are different. I also I have experience of the possible tensions between assimilating and integrating with the host country whilst ensuring that our own culture, beliefs, religious practices and identity is respected, preserved and nurtured.

As a Christian and a Catholic I come from what I hope is a strong Faith background. Although there are obvious differences in our Religious beliefs I like to think that there are also similarities - such as belief in God, commitment to the messages of the Old Testament, moral values, the importance of the family etc.

Initial thoughts on being invited to come to Calderwood

Never been a panel member and ended up with the job. Surprised – this had not been on the cards a] that a HT would be seconded b] that it would be me. I was offered time to think by John Wilson [Director of Education] but responded immediately to say that I would do it.

Amazed at the extent of the media coverage – newspapers local and National, TV, Internet

Great challenge and opportunity, fantastic experience and insight into Judaism

Privileged and flattered to be asked

But....How would the general body of parents react?... would there be resentment?

..... What about the staff?

.....How would my own staff, parents and children react?

First Impressions

Impressive building/ Fantastic site

Many good resources to support the curriculum, ICT facilities

Large number of staff for a small school – most important resource – caring and committed

School needing a bit of a facelift - estimates have been sought and I am hopeful that there will be some basic work done to improve the general appearance and facilities

Poor entrance/first impression

Interesting arrangement for Jewish religious studies and Hebrew – separated from the secular side of the school [I'm used to religion permeating the curriculum rather than being a discreet subject

A big building for a small number of pupils

Scarily well behaved on my first visit [staff as well as pupils – all a bit tense!]

Big emphasis on security

Small classes

Very aware of high expectations for the pupils but also of me.

Warm welcome from everyone – if there was any resentment or misgivings I was unaware of it – and have remained so

Group of grandparents came in – I introduced myself – ‘We know, we’ve just been watching you on the lunchtime news’.

First Couple of Weeks

HT's usually advised to ease into the job – sometimes to the extent of changing nothing for the first year. No time for that [but I've never been able to do it in the past either].

A lot of management by walking about.

Collective, individual and confidential meetings with all of the staff so that they could express their views and I could communicate my own philosophy.

Discussions with the authority for their input. Read previous reports on the school.

Consultation with CJE and school board for their perspective.

Close look at attainment for every individual pupil – discussed and presented to staff individually and then at a general meeting [whole staff]. How did our pupils perform at Calderwood and then at High school?.... how does the present level of attainment compare with other schools in the cluster?...in East Renfrewshire?.... in the country?

Getting to know parents, staff, pupils and the representatives of agencies serving the school

Next Steps

Having established a long list of priorities from the stakeholders and added my own observations I presented these to staff as our shared vision of what Calderwood Lodge needed and proceeded to work with them to narrow these to something manageable [list on screen]

Each priority was then taken in turn to become a page of our school plan. Our priorities needed to reflect the needs of the school but also reflect the National Priorities and East Renfrewshire Council's agenda

Having established, agreed and planned for changes we had to make sure that the developments would actually happen – this meant establishing working parties within the staff and ensuring that the remits of staff were clear and supported the improvements which were needed.

Our clear purpose was to improve and develop the education service within a clear framework, raise achievement and attainment, emphasise Citizenship, promote lifelong learning, encourage enterprise and support inclusion [National Priorities]

We had to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms were in place to help us succeed. These included:

- A rigorous programme of monitoring by senior staff [Maureen Langman, Ruth Watson and myself] based on clearly understood criteria and based on teachers' own self evaluation [including lessons, forward plans, assessment procedures, pupil attainment]
- Review and development for all staff providing the opportunity to acknowledge progress and set targets to support school plan priorities and, importantly, establish success criteria and CPD where necessary.
- A 'no-blame' culture with the benefits for the pupils as the purpose for all changes [I would point ou that this is not the same as a no responsibility culture].
- Close and regular checks on attainment of each child by teaching staff and management.

Effective Leadership

Different schools need a different type of leadership. Leadership needs to be flexible to deal with the wide range of issues which arise in schools – the leadership required of a failing or struggling school is very different from that needed in a successful one. Traditionally been a strong emphasis on hierarchy and formal leadership in schools but nowadays we look for a shared approach which features staff involvement and commitment, participation and collaboration. To be successful at Calderwood I had to ensure that I would be consultative, that I would encourage teamwork and orchestrate leadership within the school and community to ensure commitment to change.

'Leadership and management are not the same but are closely related concepts and essential if attainment and standards are to be raised. Management and leadership approaches can be 'the biggest factors in making quality improvements in school'

Ethos

A head teacher's job is a very interesting one. It's about managing people so that they give their best for the benefit of the pupils. Building and maintaining

a positive climate is a fundamental task for leadership and my priorities included establishing a clear academic focus and mission, motivating the staff and building confidence and trust. I needed to understand the needs of the school, have a clear purpose and direction, be visible, willing to listen, understanding, considerate and sympathetic. I believe that head teachers must be enthusiastic, inspirational, committed and care passionately about the school, its members and its reputation.

This positive climate can only occur where there is teacher goodwill and high morale '*Climate is all*' [MacBeath, 1999]. The staff at Calderwood Lodge rose to the challenge – some already had leadership roles but others took on responsibilities eagerly.

Better learning takes place where there are positive relationships between pupils, teachers and parents.

Framework

To help with shared understanding, collaboration and collegiality there needs to be structure– HGIOS provides schools with indicators of quality with which to measure themselves and be measured. It provides the framework for school planning and Standards and Quality reports.

Our school plan is a very challenging one but staff have been very supportive and without their help none of the planned initiatives could happen.

Recently the Scottish Executive has published important documents. **A Curriculum for Excellence** aspires to education becoming as seamless as possible so the idea of 5-14 programme is now becoming the 3-18 with an emphasis on continuity and communication between pre-5 and primary, primary and secondary. The curriculum has become overcrowded and schools are being asked to 'declutter'and avoid any unnecessary overlap. Flexibility is being increased for schools. At Calderwood we are fortunate to have our own very good nursery and this really helps with continuity [DHT remit]. We are presently looking at how we can bring more active play in to the early stages of the school and are working very closely with Mearns Castle High and the other associated primary schools on joint initiatives.

One of these initiatives is **Assessment is for Learning** which emphasises the benefits of formative assessment as well as summative. Staff from the high school have been to see our staff use continuous assessment techniques and have been very impressed. I am leading a working group which will produce leaflets and a DVD to help explain this further to parents. Under AifL learning intentions and success criteria is shared with pupils and self and peer assessment used extensively helping children to become part of the assessment process.

The Additional Support Needs Act made changes to the ways schools provide for pupils with special needs. Maureen Langman the DHT coordinates learning support very well and I am delighted that Gemma Waterson has joined us recently as a full time member of staff to bring a wealth of experience to help support pupils and families. We have 6 Additional Support staff and they work directly with groups and individual children and another 2 teaching staff out of class who support able pupils and those with difficulties as well as other specific tasks. A wide range of

additional resources have been purchased an excellent network of support contacts is emerging with other schools

The Parental Involvement Act [2006] strengthens the position of parents with regard to their child's education. We have a very good relationship with the School Board, the PTA and CJE and have been trying to improve the information provided for parents, produce information leaflets, a curriculum workshop, advice regarding SEN etc., We've also trialled changes to the timing and format of parents' nights. I'm pleased to say that there have been no parental complaints to the Authority since last February and only a couple of minor and easily solved issues raised by parents to the HT. I can't emphasise enough that if you have a concern about your child you must let us know so that we can help in any way we can. The new act provides an opportunity for parents to continue to be represented by a body similar to the School Board, a combination of Board, PTA etc. or indeed to choose a different format altogether.

Calderwood has come under some close scrutiny recently. In December we had a Standards and Quality inspection looking at learning and teaching, management and leadership, Attainment, Ethos etc.[the report will be issued soon] We also had an unannounced visit by the Care Commission which monitors nursery provision and if that wasn't enough the internal financial auditors came to ensure that our procedures were up to standard.

National Testing

Children are assessed as they move through the present 5-14 system – usually level A-E in the primary though there is a level F. As a staff we have been making a concerted effort to improve our performance. Teachers have conscientiously prepared the pupils and arranged the tests and our regular target setting meetings have highlighted any issues. I am delighted to say that our pupils have scored their highest results ever. 90% achievement in Writing, 92% in Reading and just under 94% in Maths. These place Calderwood in a strong position compared with the best East Renfrewshire schools and put it into one of the top 10% in Scotland – no mean feat! Standardised tests are set by the authority for p1,3,5, and 7 in February and we are hoping to repeat our National Test success.

Strengths Of The School

- Size, pupil/staff ratio
- Ethos
- Safe, caring environment
- Synagogue/home/school triangle
- Level of care
- Partnership
- Pupils
- Staff
- CJE
- Nursery on site
- Support of parents and the Jewish community
- Attainment
- Extra curricular activities

- Jewish values

What Has Changed?

New spelling scheme

New handwriting scheme

New Art scheme [ordered Friday]

New phonics

New library area

We are trying to be more welcoming

Trying to have better communication within school and with parents

Building relationships with other schools

More formative assessment

Staff taking on more responsibility

Breaking down barriers between sectors

Smother transitions

Staff more confident

Parents seem to be happy

The Education Authority is pleased with the progress made

Attainment is up

High level of support for pupils

Challenges for the Future

Maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm

Attracting the best staff

Celebrating success

Falling numbers of Jewish children

Getting existing families to send their children rather than to other state schools or the private sector

Emigrating families

Establishing the inclusion of other world religions in the curriculum – legal requirements of a state school to be balanced with sensitivity associated with a faith school [We have Simon Goulding coming to the school on Tuesday to discuss this and Maureen Langman recently represented Calderwood at a conference in London to discuss the issue of teaching other world religions in a Jewish school.

Sharing CPD, methodology, resources etc. with CJE

Integrating religious studies with the secular side of the school

The appointment of a new HT and continued change

Attracting more non-Jewish children to keep the school viable

Maintaining the Jewish Ethos

Bringing the Nursery, school and CJE staff together

Cohesion between the areas/departments of the school

Thank you for listening to what I have had to say. I really have had some fantastic experiences at Calderwood Lodge and met some very interesting people - the Chief Rabbi and Baroness Shephard to name but two. I have a fund of funny stories none less than my first Succot experience with the torrential rain and the bees and a very wet bedraggled head teacher and an even wetter Rabbi Reuben - but that's a story for another time.

I hope that you found my talk interesting and before moving on to questions I would like to end on a humorous note with an old Irish saying.

'May you be in heaven 1/2 hour before the devil knows you're dead'

Thank you.