1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report summarises the main achievements and issues for the period from January 2017 to April 2017.

2.0 Achievements and Events

2.1 On Friday 27 January pupils and staff celebrated our annual Burns’ Lunch. [Name] piped in the Haggis which was carried in by [Name] (S4 Pupil). The Address to the Haggis was given by [Name] (S7 Pupil). After the delicious meal provided by our catering staff, we celebrated with Scottish Dancing, Music and Poetry. Everyone had a really enjoyable afternoon.

2.2 On 8 February, pupils from Aberdeen Class had an excellent experiential outing to Nairn’s Biscuit Factory. The trip was hosted by [Name] at Nairn’s. The young people had the opportunity to feel and smell the ingredients of the biscuits and followed the full process from mixing ingredients to taking the finished product home. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the visit and loved the smell of the baking biscuits.

2.3 Cabinet Secretary, John Swinney, visited the school on 22 February. The Head Teacher and Chief Executive facilitated a tour of the school and visits to classes. Mr Swinney engaged with pupils and staff and was involved in a sleep shades activity involving a tactile picture. Mr Swinney also visited the school coffee shop where he was treated to a coffee and a scone. He was served by [Name] (S7 pupil) and took time to discuss concerns and issues raised by the HT and the CE. Mr Swinney also spent longer in the school than anticipated and this was taken as a positive outcome.

2.4 On Wednesday 1 and Thursday 2 March Royal Blind School pupils held a Pop up Shop and exhibition of Art and Woodwork at Morningside Library. They showcased some of the work done in the school and had the opportunity to speak about the school to various visitors to the library. A sensory story was delivered by [Name] (PT, Acting) to a group of around 15 pre-school children and their parents. The young people involved thoroughly enjoyed this experience.
2.5 On Thursday 9 March, attended a football 5-a-side festival and competition at Sighthill Power League. This event consisted of various skill practices, games in the morning and a tournament in the afternoon. Pupils worked extremely well with players from other schools, displayed good ball skills and were pleased to reach the semi-final on the day.

2.6 On Wednesday 22 March Bernadette Wood, Chocolatier, came into school to run a chocolate workshop. Pupils and staff from across school came together to enjoy a chocolate-making experience using raw cacao nibs and cocoa powder. It was a very busy afternoon with pupils learning how to make ganache from hot cream and giant chocolate buttons. Some pupils used moulds to make Easter eggs and mini eggs that were dusted with coloured sugar or coconut. The pupils and staff learned a lot about how chocolate is made; however, the best part was smelling and eating the chocolates. Pupils were able to take the rest of the chocolates home.

2.7 Pupils from the school’s photography club took part in the 2017 Fringe Schools Poster Competition and were the official runners-up for the 2017 Creative Stars Award. This special award was added to the competition in the 70th anniversary year to acknowledge groups or individuals who take a creative and innovative approach to the Fringe Schools Poster Competition. A shortlist was made from the pool of entries to the competition and the winners were selected in partnership with Dynamic Earth. The judges loved the unusual approach taken by the Photography Club, capturing the frenetic light and vibrancy of the Fringe.

2.8 Pupils from Edinburgh Class conducted a school Assembly to raise awareness and funds for Comic relief on Monday 27 March. Each pupil organised a fundraising event and shared facts about Comic Relief and the work it does. Activities included: telling jokes, an accessible football challenge, a bake sale and wacky hair spraying to raise money for the charity.

2.9 On the evening of Tuesday 28 March we welcomed bikers from the Edinburgh and District Scooter Clubs as part of their annual Easter egg run. There were more than 40 scooters and riders present, all with at least one Easter egg to present to pupils. The young people loved the sounds created by the roar of the scooters and the peeping of their horns. Some pupils were able to sit on the scooters, wear helmets, rev up the engines and peep the horns. The atmosphere was electric and the evening was a great success. This year we also received a generous donation of £100 along with the chocolate eggs.

2.10 On 3 April, a party of nine pupils and seven staff departed from Edinburgh airport bound for Amsterdam. The reason for this trip was based on the reading and discussion of the class novel, The Diary of Anne Frank. Staff reported that the fun and camaraderie between pupils was excellent, as was the curiosity to learn about new places and customs. Pupils’ social skills were extended as they ate in various restaurants; they worked as a team and looked out for one another. The group engaged in activities including an early evening canal cruise which was accompanied by an audio guide and staff used deaf-blind manual where appropriate. This was an excellent educational experience for all involved.
2.11 Four visitors from the Federal University of Paraíba in Brazil visited the school on 5 April. The group were attending an event in Glasgow “51st Annual International IATEFL Conference”, and took the opportunity to visit the school while here. Rosyclea Dantas, who volunteers as an English teacher at an institute for blind people, has been developing some research involving teacher training and foreign language teaching to blind and visually impaired people.

2.12 On 27 April, the Head Teacher and Depute Head Teachers attended the Annual SCIS Conference and AGM. This was an excellent day and provided a wide variety of opportunities for networking. Cabinet Secretary, John Swinney provided a keynote speech at the conference which included the subject of additional support needs. During a question and answer session, asked Mr Swinney if the Tribunal system, which can prove to be an arduous process for professionals and parents, would be reviewed. Connections have been made with a number of other schools with the possibility of future links.

3.0 Outreach

3.1 Science Teacher, continues to visit Strathallan School on a monthly basis.

4.0 Prospective Pupils

4.1 There are currently 5 prospective pupils with whom we are in liaison, all at varying levels of interest and likelihood of eventual placement:

- , 10 years, North Ayrshire, will enrol in August 2017 and will begin a transition programme later this term to facilitate a smooth move from North Ayrshire to the school.
- 10 years, West Lothian, awaiting tribunal
- , 4 years, Edinburgh City, Educational Psychologist has visited the school – the placement is likely to be refused
- 5 years, Glasgow, application received, awaiting LA approval
- 18 years, Dumfries, initial enquiries have been made regarding a 7th year in preparation for university.

5.0 Placing Request Tribunals

5.1 , 11 years old: This case was taken to tribunal on 12 January 2017. The decision of the panel was to refuse the placing request. The Head Teacher has since been in touch with the PA to the Chief Executive of the Tribunal process and will be submitting a range of concerns and issues relating to the transcript of the panel.

6.0 Staff – Redundancy

6.1 Owing to the fall in pupil numbers and the number of pupils leaving in June 2017, there was a request made to Classroom Assistants and Education and Learning Practitioners to volunteer for redundancy. As it stands, there is no requirement to have any compulsory redundancies within the classroom.
assistant category with enough voluntary redundancy requests meeting the need. In relation to Education and Learning Practitioners, there will be a 0.4FTE redundancy. The process of scoring has been completed and the first informal consultation with the identified member of staff was conducted on 1 May.

7.0 Manual Handling

7.1 The manual handling coordinators have all passed their training and were issued with certificates in March 2017. As previously reported, the team are working well together. Arrangements are in hand for them to have a more formal weekly meeting to coordinate their work.

8.0 School improvement

8.1 The school improvement plan will be evaluated over the next few months with new priorities for the school being set. School Collegiate Activity Nights have been very well attended by colleagues who are non-teaching. This has resulted in deeper consultation and a sense of moving forward together as one team.

9.0 52 Week Provision

9.1 The new 52 week provision opened officially on 3 April 2017. There is currently one pupil in residence; however, a number of enquiries have been received and senior managers are working with the Finance Manager to provide a charging basis and cost.

9.2 The weekends have been busy with outings and walks in the local area as well as using the Hydro pool and lights room and relaxing in the sensory garden. Time in the house has been useful for family visits and down-time. During the Easter Holiday staff took the young person out and about, to make the most of the good weather. She visited a variety of places including Craig’s Farm, Cramond Beach, Beecraigs Country Park, and Whitmuir Farm and took local walks to the Astley Ainslie Grounds and Blackford Pond.

10.0 Care Inspection

10.1 There have been no further inspections since September 2016.

11.0 Partnership working

11.1 In partnership with RNIB Scotland, we delivered a residential weekend using Drever House 3 – 5 March on similar lines to the weekend in November 2016, funded by Shared Care Scotland’s Better Breaks’ Fund. As before, we provided the accommodation and staff time. Once again, the focus was transition and independent living. Nine young people attended. The weekend provided the opportunity for a range of young visually impaired people to meet and be involved in a variety of practical life skills experiences. Staff from the school delivered workshops including assistive technology advice, cooking skills, habilitation, mindfulness and personal care. (RNIB) ran a workshop on transitioning from school to University, College, Work etc. The young people also enjoyed some recreational activities and visited local visitor
attractions. We hope to do this again, and an application for joint funding has been accepted for the year 2017/18.

11.2 Fourteen Edinburgh University students studying Issues and strategies as part of the Post Graduate Diploma course, received training in the Royal Blind School by the Habilitation team on 1 February. The students were involved in a range of practical skills covering essential mobility and orientation, sighted guide, pre-cane skills, room familiarisation, systematic searching, locating a dropped object, environmental awareness and indoor route familiarisation. Our link with the University of Edinburgh is not as close as in the past. We have been pleased to input to this essential skills training element of the course and hope it can provide a basis for developing more involvement in future.

12.0 Named Person

12.1 Implementation of the Named Person elements of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act has been postponed until June 2018.

13.0 Professional Learning Activities

13.1 Our February In-Service was held on 15 and 16 February. DHT worked with other managers to create a programme focussed on the issues around visual impairment for young people e.g. transitions, assistive technology, braille, communication tools. Physiotherapist also delivered a very positive presentation on the relevance and need for specific equipment. delivered a riveting presentation on Cerebral Visual Impairment. The programme was varied and staff have provided very positive evaluations.

14.0 International and National Conferences/Projects/Consultations

14.1 Staff members have recently participated in the following:

- JNCL/Education (Juvenile Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis/Batten Disease), Batten Disease Family Association Project has a final meeting in Finland planned for June 2017. will attend. Former member of staff and DHT will also be attending. Attendance is funded by the project, except that in this case we are sending an extra member of staff at our own expense.

- TEACH CVI, (Erasmus Project). DHT, Learning Hub Manager, and Home School Link Teacher, will be attending a meeting in Dublin this month. This will be a ‘train the trainer’ to enable attendees to disseminate the teaching materials and guidelines created for staff working with pupils with cerebral visual impairment. It should provide valuable tools for our learning hub and the school itself.

- The Scottish Government response to the consultation “Empowering Teachers …: Governance Review”, to which we responded in January, is expected in June.
15.0 Parent Forum

15.1 The Parent Forum met on 27 March. Five parents attended and provided a very positive discussion around various topics concerning the school. There were no points of concern or recommendations to this committee and parental engagement was extremely positive.

16.0 Complaints

16.1 There has been one complaint, regarding errors in administering medication. Three errors were made in respect of one pupil over a period of months by agency nursing staff, who as a result no longer work in the school. On investigation we identified a number of improvements to make to our checking and control and to the internal and external communication of such instances when they arise. These improvements are all now in place and the risks are reduced.

17.0 Recommendations

17.1 The Committee is invited to note the information contained in this report.

Elaine Brackenridge
Head Teacher
28 April 2017