

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 14 November 2024.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Kate Campbell	Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Colm Merrick	Ms Evelyn Yedd*

Councillor Pragnell in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Change); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); and Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Maria McBride, Head Teacher, St. Cadoc's Primary School; and Nicola MacGlashan, Head Teacher and Ross McLeish, Depute Head Teacher, Williamwood High School.

Apologies:

Councillors Andrew Anderson (Chair) and Danny Devlin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1035. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ST. CADOC'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

1036. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of St. Cadoc's Primary School and Nursery Class. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in August 2024 and Education Scotland had evaluated two quality indicators in both the school and nursery, and provided a short report which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) provided further information in relation to the inspection process, stating that Education Scotland had found both aspects of the work in the school to be very good: learning, teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement. Education Scotland found both aspects of the work in the nursery class to be good: learning, teaching and assessment; and securing children's progress.

The report especially highlighted 2 areas of best practice being demonstrated at St. Cadoc's Primary and identified them as worth sharing more widely on a national platform; staff had successfully embedded play in the early years of the school; and teachers' skilled use of well-considered and appropriate questioning during learning.

The committee heard from Maria McBride, Head Teacher, who advised that this had been a journey of continuous self-improvement and a commitment to strive for the best experience for every pupil. She added that the school had set ambitious goals to meet the high standards the children deserved and found it satisfying that everyone's efforts had been recognised in the report. The report also recognised that the learning experience was based on a very strong ethos underpinned by the gospel values and highlighted major strengths which were worth sharing with other educational establishments, which was a source of pride for all involved. She thanked the Director of Education and Leadership Team for their unwavering support, guidance and encouragement which had assisted the school in their journey by helping them to grow, reflect and improve, and also thanked the Education Committee for their continued support by advocating for high standards of education in East Renfrewshire. She reflected that the report had been achieved through the efforts of the whole staff team who had been fundamental in driving success by providing high quality teaching and innovative practices. She added that there was a strong sense of community in the school and the children were supported both in and out of the classroom. However, she added that a large part of the school's success was as a result of the enthusiasm of the children themselves who were at the heart of St. Cadoc's Primary School and she expressed her pride in every pupil.

Members of the Committee expressed their congratulations on an excellent report and gave high praise to the staff in relation to their dedication on creating a great learning experience within St. Cadoc's Primary School.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on St. Cadoc's Primary School; and
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROVISION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE AND OUT OF SCHOOL CARE SERVICES

1037. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the results of the biennial consultation on the provision of both early learning and childcare (ELC) and out of school care (OSC) services across East Renfrewshire.

The report explained that the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out a requirement for local authorities to consult with families on the provision of ELC and OSC every 2 years and to outline plans for service delivery. The most recent consultation took place during September/October 2024 and there was an increase in responses when compared to the previous exercise in 2022.

A summary of responses was provided which showed a positive picture with a strong average score across communities in East Renfrewshire, as a result of more flexible options which had been introduced and had proven to be very popular. It was highlighted that the Education Department continued to engage with families to ensure continued adherence to the key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability and to remain responsive to the need of families in the provision of early learning and childcare. In addition, the department continued to recognise the importance of out of school care services for families to support employment, training and wider family commitments and would continue to engage with partners national around any wider Scottish Government commitments.

In response to questions, the Education Senior Manager (Leading Change) confirmed that a number of factors could lead to a lower score including, families not receiving their first choice preference and families expressing a preference for models which were not available. He advised that although a greater degree of flexibility had been introduced, not every demand could be met and some families would remain displeased with the choice provided. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) confirmed that establishment of a directory for out of school provision had been created for parents of children with Additional Support Needs. This directory includes mainstream provisions. The ASN subgroup of the children's services partnership will ensure this directory is accessible to all parents/carers.

Having heard Councillor Pragnell highlight that some out of school clubs were conducted by teachers/staff in their own time, which was a very valuable resource for pupils, parents and carers, the Education Committee noted the results of the consultation on both early learning and childcare, and out of school care services.

PERFORMANCE OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE SCHOOLS IN THE BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION AND SENIOR PHASE

1038. Councillor Pragnell invited the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) to give a presentation on the performance of East Renfrewshire Schools in the broad general education and senior phase. It was reported that the information presented would include information from primary establishments, S1-S3 secondary data, as well as senior phase data relating to SQA awards.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) advised that the format of the report had changed this session and would follow the key themes of attainment, inclusion, participation, engagement and attendance, as set out in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Referring to attainment in the broad general education, she reported that there had been improvements in reading, writing, talking & listening, and mathematics attainment throughout the years of the Broad General Education when compared to 2022-23. There had

been an increase in performance from the previous year in all areas with 93% of Primary 1, 4 and 7 pupils achieving expected levels or better for reading, 91% for writing, 95% in talking and listening, and 92% in maths. All of these figures were also well above the national average. Referring to the council's stretch aims, she reported that although the stretch aim had been missed in some areas, including literacy, there was still time to achieve this as the targets had been identified for the period 2023-26. She added that, although the overall stretch aims for literacy and numeracy had been narrowly missed, the targets for Quintiles 1 and 5 had been met and the gender gap had reduced for numeracy. Although significant improvements had been recorded for pupils impacted by poverty, she acknowledged that there was still a long way to go to improve these targets further and reduce the poverty gap. In terms of the broad general education in secondary schools, young people were well on target to achieve the stretch aims set and figures remained higher than the national average across reading, writing and numeracy. She added that positive results across the broad general education had been achieved through the development of a shared understanding of standards and expectation in all educational establishments and through use of the Strategic Equity Fund to allow schools to provide targeted provision in their community.

Thereafter, further detail was provided on improvements in the senior phase, highlighting that 2024 saw the return to examination procedures last used in 2019, where exams ran with no adaptations. Focussing on the S4 cohort, she reported that positive progress had been made since 2019, despite the impacts of Covid, and the quality of awards had not been diminished. When comparing awards of 5 or more at SQA level 5 or better, all schools in East Renfrewshire had outperformed their virtual comparator. Excellent results had been achieved for awards of 5 or more at SQA level 6 or better for S5 pupils and all schools at this level had performed higher than the national average and outperformed the virtual comparator. Referring to pupils in S6 achieving 1 or more awards at SQA level 7, the virtual comparator was outperformed for all schools and more pupils stayed on for 6th year on 2023-24.

Further information was provided on the use of Insight tariff points which could assist with identifying gaps between different groups of pupils. Insight point information was provided by SIMD for the most deprived 30%, middle 40% and least deprived 30% of pupils, which showed that young people from decile 1 in East Renfrewshire were outperforming pupils from higher deciles living in other areas of Scotland. Leaver attainment information across literacy and numeracy was provided since 2020, showing that literacy and numeracy at levels 4, 5 and 6 had generally stayed the same or had slightly increased but stayed well above the national average.

The Head of Education (Quality Improvement and Performance) went on to provide information on Inclusion, advising that this was measured in a number of different way for example through questionnaires, inspection reports (both internal and external), and standards and quality reports. As part of that process, schools constantly demonstrated that they were very good or excellent at ensuring that young people were included. She added that 98.7% of school leavers went on to a positive destination which was the best ever in East Renfrewshire but also the best in Scotland.

Case studies were highlighted, including on work being undertaken at Isobel Mair School in relation to developing the young workforce by promoting STEM and World of Work through a play-based curriculum to encourage pupils to build resistance and become problem solvers and lifelong learners; and parental engagement work being carried out at St. Luke's High School to encourage families to discuss learning, share how their child learned and fostering engagement and enjoyment in learning together.

Further information was provided on pupil attendance which remained an area of concern both in East Renfrewshire and nationally. Although East Renfrewshire's attendance rates

remained higher than many other authorities, they were not yet back to pre-pandemic levels and more work was required to reduce absence rates. It was reported that schools and staff continued to make a tremendous effort to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and further information was provided on work being carried out at Busby Primary School which highlighted to parents the impact of poor attendance on their child's education, amongst other things.

In conclusion, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) highlighted the main points from the presentation including closing the poverty related gap; resilience of S4 pupils who had been significantly affected by the pandemic; 2024 senior phase results which included the best ever results in S5; outstanding school leaver destination achievement; and external validation from Education Scotland.

In response to questions, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) reported that, although some of the performance figures for St. Luke's High School were lower than those in other schools and when compared to previous years, the school was still more than meeting the needs of young people when compared to the virtual comparator and national figures. The Director of Education added that young people living in poverty had been disproportionately affected by the impact of Covid and interventions had been put in place to target this group. He added that the performance figures could have been lower if those interventions had not been put in place. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) advised that further information on longer term leaver destinations were captured in annual participation figures with colleagues from Work East Ren and further information could be shared with the committee in due course. She added that data from the presentation would be included in each establishment's Standards and Quality report and would also be included in the departmental Standards and Quality report which would be submitted to the committee in early 2025.

Members commended the work of pupils, teachers and staff in producing such excellent results. Thereafter, having heard Councillor Pragnell propose that a letter be sent by the Chair, Vice Chair and Director of Education, on behalf of the committee, to educational establishments thanking them for their hard work, the committee agreed:-

- (a) that a letter be sent by the Chair, Vice Chair and Director of Education, on behalf of the committee, to educational establishments thanking them for their hard work in producing another set of excellent performance results; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the presentation and associated comments made.

SPOTLIGHT ON RAISING ATTAINMENT IN WILLIAMWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

1039. Councillor Pragnell invited Nicola MacGlashan and Ross McLeish to give a spotlight presentation on raising attainment in Williamwood High School.

Ms MacGlashan advised that Williamwood High School's aim was to get it right for all learners with no one left behind and no stone left unturned. She advised that, although Williamwood was recognised as a high performing school, 30% of pupils had Additional Support Needs and many pupils were affected by hidden poverty as living in East Renfrewshire could be very expensive. She added that this had been a collective journey for the school over the last 3 years, with everyone working as a team around each young person, including input from teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and carers. Capacity had been built in staff by

working together and reaching out to colleagues in secondary schools in East Renfrewshire and across Scotland.

Mr McLeish added that the school wanted to ensure that all young people had excellent experiences and a number of curricular changes had been introduced, made possible by working with all of the secondary school in East Renfrewshire. A new qualification in sports development had been introduced, strengthening the partnership between the school and cluster primaries, and additional partnership working had also been introduced with organisations such as the Forrest School; Tigers Construction; Rangers Charity Foundation; and Glasgow Science Centre, amongst others.

Ms MacGlashan added, , she was very proud that staff worked in partnership across East Renfrewshire and beyond to provide additional experiences for young people, particularly for those who require additional support which may differ from what people may view as traditional school activities. She provided further information on the experiences of 3 young people who had experienced challenges with their mental health and, following interventions which included reaching out to partners, was pleased to report that 2 had since moved on to college courses which they were thriving at, and the other was now undertaking an Advanced Higher course. She referred to other innovations which had been introduced, including a breakfast club and various after school clubs, and reported that more boys were now attending the school library to study as food was being provided at that location. She concluded by highlighting that the landscape in one of the top performing schools in Scotland had changed to make sure that every child matters and every child achieves.

Having heard members thank Ms MacGlashan and Mr McLeish for their informative spotlight presentation, the committee noted the presentation.

CHAIR