

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE18 April 2024Report by Director of EducationDIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING PROGRESS REPORT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee on the impact of, and links between, the digital learning and teaching strategy and the wider work of the department.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of Digital Learning and Teaching.

**BACKGROUND**

3. East Renfrewshire's Education Committee noted the [evaluation](#) undertaken on the department's previous digital learning and teaching strategy; and approved the new draft [Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024-27](#) on 9 November 2023.

4. Education Committee requested the Director of Education bring forward to a future committee a report on the impact of its implementation, including in relation to the links between the digital learning and teaching strategy and the wider work of the department.

5. Committee also asked the Director of Education to provide further information on the expected impacts on pupil outcomes. The annual attainment and achievement performance presentation and Standards and Quality Report will detail pupil progress and the implementation of the strategy respectively.

6. East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department is fully committed to tackling inequity and inequalities to ensure educational outcomes of all East Renfrewshire children and young people, and the pedagogical skills of educators, are continually improved.

7. Digital literacy is an essential skill for the 21st century. East Renfrewshire's approach is to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to develop their digital literacy skills, from early years through to further and higher education.

8. Although the department continues to take a universal approach to improving outcomes, with clear intent on raising the bar for all, targeted approaches are employed to support specific equity groups including gender, ethnicity, additional support needs, care experienced and experience of poverty.

9. Our shared endeavour to firmly place equity at the heart of what we do, along with careful alignment between [national legislation](#) and Council wide, Regional and Education Department policies, provides us with our agenda moving forward.

10. Educators play a key role in supporting children and young people to develop their digital literacy skills. It is key that educators have the training and resources they need to use digital technology effectively in their teaching and learning.

11. The use of digital technology can help to extend learning beyond school. It aims to support parents and carers to use digital technology to support their children's learning at home.

12. Digital technology can play a vital role in promoting lifelong learning and employability, supporting future adults in East Renfrewshire to develop their digital literacy skills so that they can participate fully in the economy.

13. A full and comprehensive [report](#) on the progress previously made by the department to support digital learning and teaching was considered by Education Committee in November 2023.

## REPORT

14. This report provides additional information detailing how the use of digital technology has impacted on wider work of the department. This work can be categorised under the following 4 key themes.

- Digital Equity
- The use of inclusive digital technologies to raise attainment for learners who require additional support (Additional Support Needs)
- Impact on experiences and outcomes, including in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing
- Parental Engagement and Involvement

### ***Digital Equity***

15. Our schools and ELC settings sensitively and discreetly manage their digital estate, making judgements and decisions around extending learning beyond the classroom by encouraging children to borrow devices for use at home.

16. Significant investment by the department has enabled a device to be purchased for every child living in SIMD 1, 2 and 3, with 2000 Chromebooks purchased and allocated to schools based on pupils living in these deciles. This investment outlined the commitment by the Council to address the poverty related attainment gap by ensuring digital provision for those children and young people living in poverty.

17. During the Covid global pandemic, an additional 1000 devices were provided to support learners during the periods of remote learning and to allow for inclusion and greater flexibility during periods of Covid-19 restrictions within school buildings.

18. As part of the Connecting Scotland/Scottish Government Digital Inclusion programmes, 61 Mi-Fi boxes and sim cards and 152 Chromebooks were allocated to secondary schools and 438 Chromebooks were allocated to primary schools in August 2020, ensuring both access and connectivity. As part of Connecting Scotland Phase 2, an additional 150 devices were secured, 78 of which were gifted to families in our ELC settings in areas of highest deprivation, with the remaining 72 Chromebooks gifted to learners within St Luke's and Barrhead High Schools in lower SIMD households.

19. Continued investment by the Education Department has ensured that our digital refresh programme has developed over the past four years. Establishments are now given greater choice in the types of devices that they can select in order to meet needs within their own context. Establishments know their learners best and are empowered to make decisions about the types of devices required within their own setting.

20. ELC settings and schools are encouraged to carefully manage and maintain devices as necessary to ensure continued access for those who need it most. They are also encouraged, where possible, to consider utilising carry forward funds/devolved school budget to support with upgrading digital devices to ensure continued high quality learning experiences for all pupils. This approach relies on continued engagement with the Council's ICT Service to ensure ongoing support across the digital technology estate.

21. All secondary schools and around half of our primary schools utilise the Bring your Own Device (BYOD) approach. Under the leadership of head teachers, our schools can offer both teachers and learners connectivity to free and filtered access to the internet using their own devices to support learning, teaching and assessment. The BYOD approach has been highlighted by national bodies as commendable practice during inspections of our schools. Whilst offering significant benefits, the roll-out of this scheme across all pupils and establishments relies on access to stable, high-speed internet connectivity. As with any resource, we would encourage responsible use. As part of the BYOD approach, all pupils and their parents must complete a responsible user agreement. This agreement sets out clear ground rules for the safe use of phones/devices.

22. Supplementing formal education, extracurricular digital clubs are targeted towards learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, recent grant funding awarded to East Renfrewshire Council through the Digital Xtra Fund is being used to deliver the DigiSTEMClub, for identified learners from Carlibar and St. John's Primary Schools.

***The use of inclusive digital technologies to raise attainment for learners who require additional support (Additional Support Needs)***

23. A Principal Teacher of Equity (Digital Inclusion) was recruited as part of East Renfrewshire's Scottish Attainment Challenge approach. The Principal Teacher plays a key role in supporting key equity groups to access a full curriculum.

24. Over the past 12 months, East Renfrewshire has been at the forefront of a project in conjunction with Education Scotland developing accessibility features of devices in classrooms. The exploitation of these accessibility features has increased direct access to learning for learners with Additional Support Needs.

25. Chromebooks are used widely in our establishments, and learners are now aware of the features that are available which will help them in all aspects of learning (examples such as dictation or talk-to-type, text to speech and display settings). Learners are encouraged to use the features whenever they feel they are relevant, under the notion that such features are 'necessary for some, but useful for all'. In addition, the department continues to explore opportunities for digital innovation, utilising new and emerging digital technologies to support learners. Such resources are available for all schools to utilise through the department's DigiHub when required.

26. Learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) benefit from software such as translated subtitling within PowerPoint Online, translation features within Google Workspace for Education and the use of Immersive Reader. Investment in resource and training from the department has ensured the use of these features are becoming routinely used in classrooms

and have been shown to help EAL learners to effectively contribute and be a part of learning activity in our schools. This is particularly evident in the inclusion of our unaccompanied asylum seekers and children and young people from Ukraine in their learning in our schools.

***Impact on experiences and outcomes, including in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing***

27. One hundred percent of our schools have either achieved or are working towards Digital Schools Award, an externally recognised 3 step programme which assesses and recognises excellence in the use of digital technology in schools. East Renfrewshire is the first local authority in Scotland to achieve this outstanding standard across all schools.

28. Digital technologies are increasingly being used to provide high quality learning, teaching and assessment, including:

- Real time feedback on progress being provided through use of apps for formative assessment which allows practitioners to adapt learning experiences a continuous way.
- Digital tools being used to discreetly check in on learner wellbeing.
- Engaging learning activities and content such as quizzes and gamification.
- Flipped learning – teaching input videos are stored for use later during revision or viewed for homework before a lesson.

29. Recent benchmarking digital surveys demonstrate that most learners (86%) agree that digital devices help them learn in the classroom / playroom and most practitioners (82%) agree that relevant professional learning in digital technology has positively impacted on classroom practice.

30. The advancement of digital technology has also begun to reduce the workload and bureaucracy experienced by some staff. Digital approaches to planning, assessment and reporting have been highlighted during internal and external inspections as having a positive impact on reducing time spent on tasks, whilst easing access for parents.

31. Recent inspections by Education Scotland inspections, have confirmed the positive impact of digital technology on learning, teaching and assessment. This supplementary evidence can be found as Appendix 1 of this report.

***Parental Engagement and Involvement***

32. Empowering parents, informative sessions on online safety and the utilisation of the Safer Schools app are being organised for all establishments. Additionally, there is collaborative working plans with the Learn Well service aiming to enhance education for students facing Emotional Based School Absence and those in hospital settings. Moreover, establishing connections with the Adult Learning team further strengthens this comprehensive approach to addressing and minimising any further gaps in digital provision.

33. Our parents are also supported to access digital technology with regular local arrangements made in our ELC settings and schools for parents to drop in to carry out any digital related tasks linked to their child's learning.

34. At the Parent Council Chairs forum in February 2024, our Principal Teacher of Equity (Digital Inclusion) presented our new strategy to the group and provided an interactive workshop where Chairs had the opportunity to experience some of the digital resources being deployed across our ELC settings and schools.

### **Next Steps**

35. There is no doubt that the accelerated development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools creates an opportunity to reform learning, teaching and assessment. It also creates a challenge for our ELC setting and schools to navigate in a safe and ethical way as currently there are no national regulations for this technology.

36. East Renfrewshire's [Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024-2027](#), has identified the need to embrace the potential of AI, to ensure our children and young people benefit from this shifting culture.

37. In partnership with the Associate of Directors of Education (ADES) and the West Partnership, East Renfrewshire has committed its involvement in a project to develop a website of resources that can be used by local authorities and classroom practitioners as a toolkit to discuss the impact of AI on education. This initial step will build the knowledge and capacity of staff on the strengths and challenges of this approach and provide a baseline for the development work outlined in our strategy, complementing the work being taken forward through the Council's Digital Transformation Programme.

38. At our recent Head Teacher seminar in March 2024, Artificial Intelligence was on the agenda, with initial engagement and discussions taking place.

39. In addition, the Principal Teacher: Equity (Digital Inclusion), has begun to safely and proportionately engage staff across East Renfrewshire with Artificial Intelligence tools. These include Curipod, which supports the planning of learning and teaching, and School.AI, which is used by learners for research and revision tasks.

40. East Renfrewshire's [Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024-2027](#) is a key part of East Renfrewshire Council's commitment to creating a digital community and will help ensure that East Renfrewshire is a place where everyone can thrive in the digital age.

41. The Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024-2027 is an ambitious and forward-thinking plan that will help to ensure that East Renfrewshire is at the forefront of digital education.

### **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

42. All actions outlined in this paper will be met from within existing budgets across both the Education Department and ICT Service, however the ongoing financial challenges faced by local authorities both in terms of capital and revenue budgets are recognised and how this may impact on resources available to continue to support implementation of digital innovation.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

43. Education Committee is asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of Digital Learning and Teaching.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
April 2024

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Appendix 1: Supplementary Evidence from Education Scotland Inspections of East Renfrewshire Schools.

## Supplementary Evidence from Education Scotland Inspections of East Renfrewshire Schools.

*“Teachers use digital technologies creatively across the curriculum to deepen and enrich children’s learning. For example, children in Primary 7 can access learning independently using teacher recorded video tutorials to re-visit taught concepts. Almost all children are skilled in using interactive boards, tablets, laptops and coding devices from the earliest level. For example, they use software applications to create surveys, infographics and edit their work. Children act as digital leaders to support digital literacy within classrooms and across the school. The school has achieved a Digital Schools Award, of which they are proud.”*

(Neilston Primary School, Nov.2022)

*“In all classes, teachers use interactive whiteboards frequently. In most classes, teachers use digital technology well to extend and enhance children’s learning. The school has received a Digital Schools Award. Children who are digital leaders are integral to rolling out digital technologies across the school. Children develop their skills in coding, computer-aided design and 3D printing very well. Partners support staff and children effectively to develop their digital skills. For example, children in P6 and P7 participated in a local authority coding event.”*

(Crookfur Primary School, Feb.2023)

*“Children use a range of digital technology well to enhance their learning across the curriculum. They are confident using tablets to research, record and present their learning. They access and use digital applications to help gather and share views and support their learning, for example to hear correct pronunciation in French. Across the school, children are developing well their coding skills using a range of devices and software. Virtual reality (VR) headsets are providing motivating stimuli to enhance learning. For example, children use the VR headset to explore what they see, feel and hear in the Arctic to support their writing. Digital leaders use their skills in digital technology to teach skills to other children.”*

(Braidbar Primary School, May 2023)

*“In almost all subject areas, learners’ experiences are enhanced by teachers’ creative use of digital technologies. This helps to engage learners and promote high levels of participation. For example, young people can access good quality digital feedback through an online application. Parents are able to access a digital feedback platform and this supports their engagement in their child’s learning. Most parents agree that staff, commendably, give them advice on how to support their child’s learning at home.”*

*“Most young people are very positive and clear about improvements they are making in their learning following regular feedback from their teachers, particularly via digital technology platforms. As a result, they are able to talk confidently about their strengths and what they need to do to improve, particularly in the senior phase. Young people are increasingly confident in describing the skills they are developing through learning activities. Young people benefit from regular conversations with their teachers to review their progress and agree targets and strategies for improvement.”*

(Barrhead High School, Jan 2024)

*“Staff have made significant improvements to digital technology pedagogy and resources. Digital technology is very effectively used by staff and young people across the curriculum to enhance the learning experience. This has led to the school becoming a mentor school for “schools in the local authority.”*

*“Almost all young people who require additional support with their learning are well supported in class. They are supported through, for example, differentiated materials, particular approaches to learning or through the use of digital devices and applications.”*

*“In S1 as part of school induction, young people develop their understanding of how to use a library and how resources, including digital technologies, can support them in their learning.”*

(St Luke’s High School, Mar 2024)

*“Teachers use digital technologies successfully as a tool to support teaching and to enhance learning experiences. Younger children scan matrix barcodes independently using a tablet to access games and texts. They demonstrate their mathematical knowledge by directing programmable floor robots and extend their literacy skills using writing tablets. In a few classes, children working at Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) second level, are using an online platform well to extend and share their learning experiences.”*

*“The headteacher and staff carefully consider the school’s equity and equalities strategy and meaningful ‘cost of the school day’ approaches. Senior leaders create and discuss demographic and equity overviews for each class. As a result, all staff have a sound understanding of challenges affecting the school community. They ensure financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for learning and achievement. Staff provide free clubs, clothing, and equipment, and ensure all children have access to digital technologies to support their learning.”*

(Kirkhill Primary School, Mar 2024)