

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 26 September 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)
Councillor Colm Merrick

Councillor Gordon Wallace
Ms Dorothy Graham
Mr Des Morris
Ms Evelyn Yedd

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

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, Senior Manager Leading Change (Education); Tracy Morton, Senior Manager (Developing People) and Victoria Harkness, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Danny Devlin and Ms Fiona Gilchrist.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

950. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

The Chair noted the running order of the meeting had been changed from the originally published agenda, to the following:

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON CROSS ARTHURLIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

951. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of Cross Arthurlie Primary School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in June 2024 and Education Scotland had evaluated two quality indicators 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 found both aspects of the work to be very good: learning, teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement. The report especially highlighted 2 areas of best practice being demonstrated at Cross Arthurlie Primary and identified them as worth sharing more widely on a national platform; professional learning and enquiry and teaching and learning in French.

It was noted the report identified two areas for improvement; for the school to continue to support children to use feedback to set and evaluate their own targets in learning and continue to develop approaches to monitor the progress of children's learning across all curricular areas. The recommendation being to "continue to" as both areas having already been identified by the school as improvement priorities they are working towards.

The committee heard from Fiona MacDonald, Head Teacher, who thanked the committee for their continued support and explained that she was delighted with the report. She was particularly pleased with the recognition of school's strong commitment to recognising the needs of their pupils and continuously trying to build positive relationships with their children and families. She reflected that the report had been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the entire school community and paid tribute to all of the staff and their dedication and commitment to developing the curriculum.

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 Cross Arthurlie Primary.

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

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

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON CAROLSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

952. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of Carolside Primary School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in May 2024 and Education Scotland had evaluated four quality indicators 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 and conveyed to the committee that the report was considered exceptional. In assessing the indicators of quality in the school, Education Scotland found 1 aspect of the work to be excellent: leadership of change; and 3 areas to be very good: learning, teaching and assessment, ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion and raising attainment and achievement.

It was noted the report identified two areas for improvement; for the school to continue with improvement priorities to build on highly effective practice in learning and teaching and the support of children's wellbeing and continue as planned, develop approaches to tracking and monitoring of children's wider achievements and progress in all curricular areas. The recommendation being to "continue to" as both areas having already been identified by the school as improvement priorities they are working towards.

The committee heard from Bryan McLachlan, Head Teacher, who provided further information on the inspection. Mr McLachlan was pleased that the key strengths of the School and Carolside Communication Support Service (CCSS) had been highlighted during the inspection and had affirmed that together with their highly effective senior leaders, they have been able to create a culture where children, parents, staff and partners feel empowered and motivated and where hearing children's voices was at the heart of their learning experience. He expressed his pride in the children who attend the school and referred to the close partnership working with parents and families, which was an extremely important part of the school's pupil centric approach to learning. He thanked all staff and partners for their enthusiasm and commitment which had led to such a positive report, adding that staff were well placed to continue to take forward the areas for improvement highlighted. He also thanked the Education Leadership Team and the Education Committee for their continued support and encouragement.

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

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on Carolside Primary School
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

PROGRESS REPORT ON PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

953. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the Education Department's progress implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (NIF).

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) gave a background to the report and explained that on 6 January 2016, the Scottish Government had launched the NIF to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education. The framework was reviewed annually with the 2024 NIF and associated Improvement Plan published in December 2023.

The NIF contains 5 national priorities, which mirror the Council's own aspirations as set out in our Local Improvement Plan 2024-2027, West Partnership Improvement Plan and Strategic Equity Plan, these being noted as: placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education; improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people; improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people; and improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) referred to the key strengths highlighted in the report as found in Appendix 1.

Councillor O'Donnell sought clarification on why the percentage of SIMD Q1 pupils in S3 achieving expected levels had increased so dramatically in one year. In reply, the Head of Service (Quality Improvement and Performance) suggested a range of factors could be contributed including the targeted use of Scottish Attainment Challenge monies, both at authority and school level, the Director of Education added as explanation that the increased focus on the broad general education of S1-S3 pupils, along with moderation of work across all schools has also contributed to the increased levels.

In response to Councillor Campbell's question about why there has been an increase in the number of referrals for mental and emotional support across schools, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that there has been an emphasis in schools on developing and rolling out a range of supports and resources that allow children the opportunity to discuss and reach out for support; giving them the confidence and self-awareness to seek help if in need, thus increasing the number of overall referrals.

Thereafter, the committee noted the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES THROUGH SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE FUNDING: STRATEGIC EQUITY PLAN 2024-2025

954. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the updated Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) Plan Action Plan 2024–2025 and associated stretch aims.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) highlighted that stretch aims were developed having taken account of 5 key principles: ambition for all – any stretch aims should improve outcomes for all learners and close relevant equity gaps; alignment - the agreed stretch aims should enable strategic council (Outcome Delivery Plan and Fairer East Renfrewshire Plan), departmental (Local Improvement Plan) and school improvement plans to reflect the ambitious and achievable aim to improve outcomes for all learners, whilst closing the poverty related attainment gap; reliability – measures should be based on reliable and robust data, including national benchmarking data, which supports improvement; relevance – stretch aims need to reflect the East Renfrewshire context and take account of the Education Department's self-evaluation evidence; and subsidiarity - it is important that the East Renfrewshire Stretch Aims are relevant and support improvement at all levels of the system, from the classroom to national level.

In reply to Councillor Anderson's query asking if the stretch aims that had been set are realistic and achievable, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) acknowledged that last year the committee had agreed that the stretch aims should be ambitious as opposed to setting targets that could be cautiously achieved and that individual schools and establishments had played a significant role in formulating the targets and as such were putting in place the support in each cohort for their young people to achieve those targets. It was noted that the East Renfrewshire stretch aims are a statement of intent agreed

upon for schools and the department to raise the bar for everyone, allowing every child to make progress at an accelerated rate thus closing the attainment gap.

The committee agreed to:-

- a) the committee approved the updated action plan and associated stretch aims; and
- b) request the Director of Education to bring regular reports to Education Committee on the progress and impact of its implementation.

WEST PARTNERSHIP 1140 HOURS OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE RESEARCH

955. The Committee was asked to consider a report by the Director of Education detailing the progress made with the West Partnership 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare Research.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) gave some background to the report stating since August 2021, all 3-4 year olds and some eligible 2 year olds in Scotland have been entitled to 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) per year. The Scottish Government highlighted the primary objectives of this policy were to improve children's outcomes and reduce the attainment gap; increase parents' opportunities to return to work, training, or further study; and support and promote family wellbeing. Detailing the methodology behind the report where 97 settings from both the private, public and voluntary sector across 8 local authorities, contributed to the evaluation, culminating in the recommendations summarised in Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Wallace queried the benefits of encouraging the removal of 3 and 4 year olds from a home setting and putting them essentially into a full time early years setting and asked if there was research being carried out on the effects of this. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) communicated the benefits to parents financially of the introduction of 1140 hours, as many already had their children in a nursery or child care setting for more than the hours they were getting funding for. It was also confirmed there is currently a national study taking place on the introduction of the 1140 hour model and its overall effects.

Councillor Campbell highlighted the issue of child care staff feeling under greater pressure since the introduction of 1140 hour across Scotland and asked what support had been put in place for them. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) replied advising a comprehensive professional learning offer is afforded to staff and that we continue to work closely with the West Partnerships and our own educational psychology team to make sure we are supporting staff to support children, with our next steps being to take forward the report recommendations to create an action plan that should address the issues found in relation to staff support. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) contributed that there is support provided by the Early Years Outreach Team, having

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recognised the increased numbers of children with additional support needs presenting in our nurseries and family centres and funded providers.

The committee noted the report.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE: EVALUATION REPORT 2023-24

956. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing it of the evaluation of work undertaken by the West Partnership (Glasgow Region Education Improvement Collaborative) in 2023 - 2024.

The attached report in Appendix 1 provided details on the progress over the last academic year towards achieving each of the associated target outcomes and expected impacts, as detailed in the West Partnership Improvement Plan for 2023-2024.

The Director of Education provided further information highlighting that the report, which provided an overview of the West Partnership saw a significant growth in engagement with practitioners experienced in the 2023-2024 session, with 92% of the region's schools across primary, secondary, and special sectors engaged with the activities. Included in the report is an overview of the strengthened evaluation model including the three drivers of improvement. The report showcases progress in enhancing collaboration, improving knowledge and confidence and changing practice. Three main illustrations which demonstrate impact in these three improvement areas have been included along with an overview of the work that has been completed in each workstream. The Director of Education was pleased to note the West Partnership continues to compare favourably against national figures across most measures despite the significant increase in engagements and the West Partnerships demographic.

Members commented on the positive outcomes of the collaborative work of the West Partnerships and its significance in relation to the positive impact it is having on our teachers and learning staff.

The Committee noted the West Partnership Improvement Plan for 2023-24.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-25

957. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the contents of the West Partnership's Improvement Plan 2023-2024.

It was reported that Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) were established in 2017 as a national initiative to bring about improvement for all schools in Scotland. They are intended to bring together local authorities and Education Scotland, facilitating collaborative working and providing educational support to practitioners. The Partnership is required to produce an annual improvement plan which outlines the vision, purpose and key activities of the collaborative for the year ahead. Education Committee should note that the plan captures those areas where collaboration between the partners will be beneficial. Not all schools or local authorities will participate in all activities, but the plan sets out the partnership's offer to schools, based on what stakeholders have indicated they would benefit from.

The Director of Education highlighted key areas within the report, referring to the consultation to date and the evidence gathered which saw a clear consensus that the existing programs and activities are broadly meeting the needs of staff and leaders across the West Partnership

and as a result the three work streams will continue to be: Wellbeing For Learning; Leadership Empowerment And Improvement; And Curriculum, Learning, Teaching And Assessment.

Councillor Wallace highlighted evidence in the report that primary and secondary attendance rates had fallen consistently since 2018-2019 and asked what was being done to rectify this. The Director of Education responded by noting that this is a national trend being experienced across Scotland and a considerable number of head teachers and schools had signed up to collaborative research on the matter to enable them to develop their own projects and their own interventions. Attendance rate recovery remains a critical area for the authority and it is recognised as a multifaceted issue.

The committee approved the report.

CHAIR

