

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 23 August 2018.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Charlie Gilbert
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Danny Devlin	

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Liona Allison, Democratic Services Support Officer.

Also attending:

Sarah Clark, Head Teacher; Ursula Scrimgeour, Depute Head Teacher; and Lynn O’Brien, teacher; Beth Brady, Head Girl; Alex Oliphant, Head Boy; Amber Weizig and Musa Choudhry, pupils, Isobel Mair School; and Ruairdh Edgar and Rachael Lafferty, pupils, Woodfarm High School; and Rob Lawson, Head Teacher, Giffnock Primary School.

Apologies:

Councillor Alan Lafferty; Dr Frank Angell and Ms Mary McIntyre.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

546. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

DREAMS COME TRUE WEEKEND 2018

547. Councillor O’Kane welcomed staff and pupils from Isobel Mair School and pupils from Woodfarm High School who had attended the recent Dreams Come True Weekend at Lochgoilhead Outdoor Centre.

Having highlighted that the 2018 event had been combined with Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that a number of young people with additional support needs from Isobel Mair School and some from mainstream secondary schools had attended the event. As in previous years, each young person had been partnered with a senior pupil from S5 who had volunteered to be a “buddy” to that young person over the weekend, although this year had for the first time also seen a senior pupil from Isobel Mair acting as a “buddy” to a younger pupil from the school.

Details of some of the activities in which the pupils had been involved were provided. These included sailing, canoeing climbing and orienteering, as well as more social events including a talent show and disco.

The young people then presented a number of photographs to members of the committee demonstrating the range of exciting activities in which they had taken part over the weekend and explained what they had gained from attending the event. The “buddies” from Woodfarm High School explained how they had made new friends and increased their own self-confidence and also commented on the positive relationships which had developed between themselves and the pupils from Isobel Mair School.

Councillor O’Kane, supported by other members, commended the valuable experience gained by all of the participants. On behalf of the committee he congratulated all of the young people who had taken part in the event both from Isobel Mair School and their “buddies” and also thanked those members of staff who had worked so hard and given up their weekend to ensure that the event had been such a success.

GIFFNOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS - EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION REPORT

548. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the findings of the Education Scotland inspection of Giffnock Primary School and Nursery Class carried out in January 2018, published in June 2018, and providing details of the action plan that had been prepared to address the agreed areas for improvement. A copy of the inspection report and action plan accompanied the report.

The report explained that this was only the second East Renfrewshire establishment to be inspected under the new inspection framework under which Education Scotland evaluated 4 quality indicators and thereafter produced a short report detailing strengths and areas for improvement.

The report further explained that in assessing the quality indicators in the school, Education Scotland had evaluated 2 aspects of the work, leadership of change; and learning, teaching and assessment, to be “good”, whilst the other 2 aspects, raising attainment and achievement; and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion, had been evaluated as “very good”. In terms of the nursery class 3 aspects of work, leadership of change; learning, teaching and assessment; and securing children’s progress, had been evaluated as “good”, whilst the fourth, ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion was evaluated as “very good”.

Having highlighted the high quality of the inspection report it was explained that two areas for improvement had been identified. The first action related to increased staff focus on a smaller number of key priorities over the year with all initiatives across the school being directed towards raising attainment and achievement for all learners. The second related to improvements in approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment to ensure consistently high quality experiences with staff making sure all children were appropriately challenged with children being more involved in leading their learning.

An action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement had been drawn up and the Quality Improvement Service (QIS) would work closely with the school and leadership team to support its implementation.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Giffnock Primary School and Nursery Class. However the QIS would revisit the school within 2 years to review the impact of the school's improvement plan and to provide a progress report to parents and Elected Members.

Whilst welcoming the report, Councillor Wallace noted the high incidence of "good" evaluations. Recognising that there may have been changes to the inspection regime since his time as a member of the Education Committee some years ago, he suggested that the inspection reports that were presented to committee at that time contained many more evaluations of "very good" and "excellent".

In reply the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) confirmed that there had been a change in the inspection regime with national standards being driven up, and explained that of the 173 inspections carried out under the new arrangements only 11 evaluations of "excellent" or "very good" had been achieved. He reported that whilst the report was positive, there was still an ambition to better the evaluation ratings that had been obtained, and the action plan that had been prepared would help in this.

In addition, the Director highlighted that in many cases the school was delivering very good and excellent practice with the challenge being to do so on a consistent basis. Taking into account the new national context she stated that she was delighted with the report.

Councillor Merrick welcomed the report, referred to the evaluations obtained in the context of the 6-point grading scale in use and noted that the committee would hear in due course on how the action plan was being delivered and the changes it was making.

Councillor Gilbert recognised the ambition of pupils and teachers to do as well as possible and the support provided by the directorate to help this be achieved.

Councillor O'Kane then welcomed to the meeting Mr Rob Lawson, Head Teacher.

Mr Lawson paid tribute to the work of all those involved in achieving such a positive inspection report; staff and pupils, officers in the department, and Elected Members. Referring to the report's findings he welcomed the report's comments recognising how the children were able to articulate their learning, that the report's findings aligned with the issues identified by the school in its own self-evaluation, and that the report was being seen very much as a platform for future development.

Councillor O'Kane on behalf of the committee offered congratulations to the school for the report.

The committee:-

- (a) noted the report; and
- (b) approved the action plan.

OVERVIEW OF 2018 SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS

549. Councillor O’Kane invited Dr Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance), to give a brief overview of attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations in East Renfrewshire schools in 2018.

Dr Ratter explained that the 2018 results were outstanding across all the key measures. He also explained that the achievements of young people in East Renfrewshire had rightly attracted much publicity and that the Education Department was delighted with the results across its secondary schools, with young people managing to outperform the previous best ever S5 and S6 results.

Before commenting further Dr Ratter acknowledged that the high standards achieved were as a result of the learning that took place throughout the broad general education and senior phase in conjunction with the hard work of pupils and support of staff and parents.

Thereafter he highlighted a number of particular achievements. These included, amongst others, continuing strong performance of young people in S4 with 75% of the year group achieving 5 or more qualifications at level 5 or better, similar to the previous year; 283 pupils (21% of the year group) achieving 8 or more grade A passes at National 5 up from 20% the previous year; and an increase in the number of pupils on the original S4 roll achieving 5 or more Highers. He also highlighted that Barrhead and Williamwood High Schools had achieved their best ever S5 results; best ever performance across the authority at Advanced higher level in S6 with 41% of the original S4 group achieving 1 or more Advanced Highers, an increase of 2% from 2017; and St Luke’s and St Ninian’s High Schools achieving their best ever results for the proportion of S6 pupils achieving 1 or more Advanced Highers with an increase of almost 5% in the case of St Ninian’s High School.

Dr Ratter concluded by saying that the improvements at S4, S5 and S6 in the 2018 SQA results provided further clear evidence that the department had raised the bar for all pupils and was delivering on its vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

In response to questions from Councillor Wallace on the reduction of pupils being presented for examination in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, Dr Ratter explained that whilst this may be the picture nationally, this trend was not reflected locally with the number of presentations in these subjects, particularly mathematics, going up. He also highlighted the department’s STEM Strategy as part of which a broad curriculum was maintained through S3 and S4, helping to maximise opportunities for pupils.

Councillor Buchanan then congratulated the Director and her team on another set of impressive results. He referred to the challenge of maintaining such high levels and how the results achieved suggested that the department was delivering on its aim of improving consistency of learning across the authority.

Councillor Bamforth welcomed the report and how the figure of 45% achieving 5 or more Highers compared extremely well against the national average of 16%.

Councillor O’Kane having also welcomed the very positive results, and having reminded members that the results were not an end in themselves but a means to opening up opportunities for the young people of East Renfrewshire, the committee noted the information provided and that a more detailed presentation would be submitted to a future meeting.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY – REVIEW OF 2017/18 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2018/19

550. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 August 2017 (Page 100, Item 108 refers), when it had been agreed that a further report would be provided at the end of session 2017/18, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education reviewing progress in achieving the key objectives in health, safety and security in 2017/18. The report also looked forward to the forthcoming year noting that the department remained committed to health, safety and security issues and setting further goals for 2018/19. A copy of the Education Department Annual Health, Safety and Security Report accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources) reported that the department remained committed to maintaining and improving its standards in health, safety and security and this was evidenced by the work undertaken in 2017/18 details of which were contained in the report, and the planned activity for 2018/19. Priority areas for 2018/19 included, amongst others, the completion of fire warden training and safe use of ladders training for 20% of schools; the completion of evacuation chair training, and conclusion of a review of Standard Circular 8(b) – Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour and Violence towards Staff; and a review of Standard Circular 33 – Safety in Outdoor Education – A Code of Practice.

Commenting further on the report the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources) highlighted the significant decrease in the number of incidents of violence to staff from 359 to 262 (27%). She clarified that as in the past, the incidents tended to involve a small number of children with identified additional support needs.

Mr Morris having welcomed the reduction and the fact that it reversed a trend over recent years, Councillor Merrick sought clarification of a number of matters in relation to fire safety.

In reply the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources) confirmed that fire warden training was conducted on a cyclical basis but that training was not restricted and staff from schools outwith those that had been identified were not excluded if training was required. She further explained the reasons for the rating of the Fire Risk Assessment in relation to St Joseph's Primary School remaining at "High" and the steps that were being taken to address this. In addition, she confirmed that the assessments in relation to Barrhead High School were in relation to both the old and the new schools, that the assessment on the new school was conducted during the transition period, and that the risk assessment rating was now "low". Concluding she commented on the descriptors of incident type associated with the accident and incident figures that were reported.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the progress made in 2017/18 in achieving the Education Department's agreed health, safety and security objectives;
- (b) approve the health, safety and security objectives recommended for 2018/19; and
- (c) instruct the Director of Education to provide a further report at the end of session 2018/19.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT YEAR END REPORT 2017/18

551. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the year end performance of the Education Department based on performance indicators

in the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2017 -20. A copy of the Education Department Year End Report 2017/18 accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) reported that progress against the performance indicators and activities in the ODP was reviewed on a six-monthly basis and the report set out a high level summary of the performance of the Education Department throughout 2017/18 under the headings of; Outcomes, Customers, Efficiency and People. A number of key highlights under each heading were included along with areas where further improvement was necessary. He went on to explain that the information presented in the report represented a very positive picture overall.

Welcoming the report, Councillor Wallace queried whether there had been any negative impacts associated with the implementation of the new admin and clerical structure. In reply, the Director explained that the new structure had been designed to work in tandem with, for example, the introduction of digital processes such as ParentPay, which reduced the amount of time that needed to be spent on cash handling tasks by school staff.

She confirmed that some further development was still required to maximise the digital opportunities which would become available, and that the structure would be kept under review.

Councillor Buchanan having welcomed the report and highlighted the challenges facing the council as an already high-performing authority, the committee approved the report as a summary of the Education Department's year end performance for 2017/18.

NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT NETWORK

552. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (NIF). A copy of the evidence report submitted to Education Scotland accompanied the report.

The report referred to the introduction of the NIF which was intended to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education, to the planning and reporting duties that underpinned the NIF, and how it mirrored the Council's aspirations as set out in various plans and strategies including the departmental strategy *Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire*.

In addition, the report explained that the annual Standards and Quality Report produced by the department provided evidence of how the bar had been raised for all learners, whilst at the same time the inequalities of outcome experienced by the more disadvantaged children and young people in the area had been reduced. This was in addition to setting out progress that had been made towards the NIF's 4 national priorities, details of which were outlined.

Thereafter, having provided brief details of the department's annual evaluation process, the report outlined the sources from which the information contained in the evidence report had been drawn as well as highlighting that the evidence report contained a high level summary of the progress being made locally in delivering the 4 NIF priorities, with a number of examples being listed including very strong and improving SQA results in S4, S5 and S6, and improvements in the proportion of children and young people in the most deprived 20% achieving the expected levels of reading at P4 and P7; and numeracy across all stages.

The report also listed a number of examples of local drivers for improvement including the recently approved Leadership Strategy and Parental Engagement Strategy amongst others. The report noted that the implementation of priorities would be monitored on an ongoing basis and reported to the committee annually through yearly presentations on attainment and Standards and Quality Reports.

Councillor Wallace having welcomed the increasing number of pupils attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or 6, the Council's performance being significantly better than the national average, Dr Ratter highlighted the outstanding range of vocational opportunities available to East Renfrewshire young people, delivered in a variety of settings, which help to make them well placed for future working life.

The committee noted the report.

CHAIR

