

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 8 October 2015.

Present:

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon McCaskill
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Mr Alan Munro
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	

Councillor Green in the Chair

Attending:

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources); Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Alan Lafferty, Mary Montague and Vincent Waters; Dr Frank Angell, and Ms Mary McIntyre.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1755. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR’S REMARKS

1756. Councillor Green offered the congratulations of the committee to Janice Collins who had recently been appointed to the post of Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity).

PRESENTATION – SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS 2015

1757. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 27 August 2015 (Page 1580, Item 1687 refers) when it had been noted that a full presentation, including an examination of the improvement made by pupils in the most disadvantaged groups, would be made to this meeting, Councillor Green invited the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) to make a brief presentation on the results of the 2015 diet of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) provided a comparison of East Renfrewshire performance in 2015 against its Virtual Comparator schools explaining that this had been the first year in which East Renfrewshire had presented candidates for the new National 4 and 5 examinations. He highlighted that pupils had once again achieved outstanding S4, S5 and S6 results achieving the best ever results at 5 or more awards at Level 4 and 5 in S4; 1,3,and 5 awards at Level 6 in S5; and 1 or more awards at Level 7 in S6. East Renfrewshire schools had performed very well in comparison to their Virtual Comparators and the quality of awards achieved remained very high. He went on to advise that results for all East Renfrewshire young people, including the lowest performing 20%, had continued to improve over recent years and that young people from the most deprived backgrounds, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), performed well above comparator groups nationally.

Responding to comments from Members, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance), supported by the Director of Education, explained that S4 results at Barrhead High School had been slightly disappointing but noted that these had followed on from the school's best ever results in 2014. Year on year fluctuations were to be expected and the trend would continue to be closely monitored. He also explained that all schools were encouraged and supported to establish Learning Partnerships with their comparator schools in order to share data and to learn from areas of best practice. The Director expressed the view that the decision taken by the committee to delay the introduction of the new National 4 and 5 examinations in order to maximise the time and resources made available to schools to prepare pupils for the transition had been clearly vindicated by the results highlighted in the presentation. She went on to explain that the Council's response to the Scottish Government's draft national improvement plan for education was still being formulated and that a report would be presented to the committee for consideration in due course. The Council's basic approach was to focus on providing all pupils with a broad general education and to continue to focus on improving the performance of pupils in SIMD deciles 1 - 3.

Responding to Mr Munro who raised the matter of the Council's view on the recent announcement by the Scottish Government regarding the proposed reintroduction of a form of standardised national testing, the Director explained that standardised assessment allowed for a degree of benchmarking against other authorities which could in turn lead to the identification and introduction of areas of best practice. However, she expressed the view that standardised testing at the senior phase was too late and that the Council's use of local tracking information which allowed for very early intervention was a major strength of its successful approach and one which it would be very reluctant to see diluted as a result of the reintroduction of national assessments.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance), responding to a further comment from Mr Munro regarding recent media comments, which Mr Munro strongly rejected, portraying East Renfrewshire schools as "exam factories" and suggesting that there was a high drop-out rate of former East Renfrewshire pupils from higher and further

education establishments, explained that there was currently no data available to enable the Council, or anyone else, to track former pupils' performance at, for example, 5 years after leaving school and that the Council would welcome the availability of any data which would allow this to be done.

Councillor Fletcher congratulated the Director of Education, teachers, parents and pupils on another set of excellent results and expressed the view that such results would inevitably result in a further increase in placing requests from parents in neighbouring local authorities and that managing this demand whilst still providing sufficient school places for local children would require considerable effort and management input.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane congratulate all those concerned in the results and express the view that the Council's continuing aim was to provide an excellent educational experience designed to produce well rounded individuals whose only limitation was their own ambition, and that raising attainment, advancing equality and equity, and improving the performance of disadvantaged groups remained key priorities, the committee agreed;

- (a) to note the presentation; and
- (b) that a letter be sent jointly from the Convener for Education and Equalities and the Director of Education to all schools thanking everyone involved in the education system for their achievements.

CHAIR

