

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 28 September 2023.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)

Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)
Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Ms Dorothy Graham
Mr Des Morris
Ms Evelyn Yedd (*)

(*) indicates remote attendance

Also Present:

Marlyn Brennan, Quality Improvement Officer
Emma Proctor, Carolside Primary School
Cameron Gibbs, Eastwood High School

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Performance & Quality Improvement); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Provision); Colin Wright, Committee Services Officer; and John Burke, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin, Tony Buchanan and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

609. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MODERN LANGUAGES FOCUS – VERBAL UPDATE

610. Marlyn Brennan, Quality Improvement Officer, provided a verbal update on the Education Department's progress towards improving the quality of children and young people's experiences in the learning of modern languages with a focus on staff professional development and learners' experiences and opportunities within educational establishments across East Renfrewshire Council. She was supported by Emma Proctor a teacher from

Carolside Primary School and a language leader involved in the language learning programme, and Cameron Gibbs, a pupil from Eastwood High School. A background to the work in language learning was provided. An update on foreign language learning for young people in East Renfrewshire was also provided. It was noted that a modern language is a core part of language learning, with pupils often electing to pursue a second foreign language from primary 5 onwards, with continuation of the language learning in secondary school. The importance of making language learning relevant to pupils was emphasised, particularly due to the discipline and hard work involved in learning languages. This involved creating awareness for the global opportunities for pupils following language learning. The importance of having teachers with the skills and enthusiasm in language learning across primary and secondary education was emphasised.

Emma Proctor provided a summary of her background as a language leader and learners. She stressed the importance of the effective staff language network in East Renfrewshire. She then provided details of her learning journey. She had been inspired by language learning at school and thereafter completed an Open University course to develop her language learning skills. A course in France had also enhanced her learning experience.

Cameron Gibbs provided information on his learning experience at Eastwood High School focussing on a third year exchange trip to Spain. He explained that he had been chosen from a number of pupils who had applied and a number of meetings had taken place before the trip, including videos sent from the Spanish school. He provided further details of the trip on the presentation slides, including photographs from Valencia. He concluded by emphasising how beneficial the course had been to his language learning and in particular how it had enhanced his enthusiasm for languages.

Members praised the pupils, teachers and support staff involved in the language-learning programme, especially the developments in primary education. The presenters were thanked for their very informative presentation and the Committee wished them all the best for the future. It was also agreed to submit a report in two years' time updating on the progress of the language-learning programme.

PROGRESS REPORT ON PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

611. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing the Education Committee on the progress made towards overtaking the priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework. The Framework is intended to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education and is reviewed annually. The five key priorities were highlighted and although it was reported that significant progress had been made, there was still work to be done in order to close the poverty related attainment gap further and increase the pace of these improvements. It was also reported that school attendance had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, although it was acknowledged that the situation had improved since the pandemic.

Discussion took place on the issue of the mental health impact of the pandemic on those pupils, particularly in relation to nursery school children, who had been deprived of a normal upbringing due to the pandemic and it was acknowledged that this was having an impact on their behaviour at nursery.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to note the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework.

PROGRESS AND IMPACT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC EQUITY FUND PLAN 2022-2026

612. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education updating it on the Education Department's progress implementing priorities associated with the Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) Plan for 2022 – 2026. The Committee was reminded that, in August 2022, it had agreed to the Department's Strategic Equity Plan, detailing approaches to improving attainment, with a request for the Director of Education to bring regular reports to the Education Committee on the progress and impact of its implementation. The highlights of the progress towards the plan were summarised, along with case studies.

During discussion, the Head of Education Services was praised for the progress achieved. The use of case studies was also praised and it was suggested that they could be used more often in reports to bring a sense of realism to the progress achieved. A question was asked as to whether there were plans to roll out the Learn Well service to other establishments and in response it was affirmed that the funding for SEF is only available for three years and that the programme has the objective of longer term sustainability of the interventions employed by the Learn Well Service and as such, the interventions utilised are being shared to allow all establishments and staff to become aware of and implement such strategies, within the available funding.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to note the Education Department's progress with its Strategic Equity Plan 2022 – 2026.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES THROUGH SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE FUNDING: STRATEGIC EQUITY PLAN 2023-2024

613. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education requesting approval for the updated Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) Plan Action Plan 2023 – 2024 and associated stretch aims. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided the background and details of the progress made in relation to ensuring that all learners would be supported to realise their potential, following Article 28 of the UNCRC, which stated that children and young people had the right to education and that education should develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (Article 29).

The Strategic Equity Plan entitled Delivering Excellence through Equity, provided details of the activities involved and the short and long-term aims for the Plan. The Education Department had identified areas for improvement in well-being, literacy and numeracy and Learning and Teaching and information was provided on the activities involved to achieve the stretch aims.

During discussion, the importance of setting more the targets as challenging and aspirational was acknowledged as being important to ensure we continued to aim for the best outcomes for learners. Ensuring a high level of expectations would ensure that those who required help the most would benefit.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed:-

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

REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

614. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education on progress made with Pupil Equity Funding in East Renfrewshire Council. The review identified key strengths in East Renfrewshire, along with some next steps for schools and the Department.

During discussion, it was questioned as to the extent to which schools make full use of the PEF fund. In response, the Head of Education advised that East Renfrewshire's schools make very good use of the PEF fund and that the challenge of reporting the total spend related to the misalignment of the financial and academic years, and that PEF spend not complete by the end of the financial year, would in almost all cases be spent by the end of the academic year. PEF budget is not committed by financial year is carried forward to the next financial year. It was commented that the Education Department monitors PEF budget regularly and reports to the Scottish Government on this.

The Head of Education commented that whilst PEF allocations to schools is determined on the basis of the number of children entitled to a Free School Meal, and that these children are the main focus for the use of the fund to improve learner outcomes, that head teachers do have flexibility in their use of PEF given circumstances where FME children are already performing appropriately.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to note the progress made with Pupil Equity Funding in East Renfrewshire Council.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE: EVALUATION REPORT 2022-2023

615. 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 2022 - 2023. The attached report in Appendix 1 provided details on the progress over the academic year 2022-2023 towards achieving each of the associated target outcomes and expected impacts, as detailed in the West Partnership Improvement Plan for 2022-2023. The evaluation report provided an overview of the collective impact and benefit of the West Partnership annual activity, which was delivered through three core workstreams. These were:

- (a) Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment.
- (b) Well-being for Learning.
- (c) Leadership, Empowerment, and Improvement.

The Committee was informed that the final version of the report would include comments from the Communications Team.

The Committee noted the West Partnership Improvement Plan for 2022-23.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-2024

616. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing it of the contents of the West Partnership's Improvement Plan for 2023 – 2024. The Partnership was required to produce an annual improvement plan, which outlined the vision, purpose and key activities of the collaborative for the year ahead. The West Partnership Improvement Plan

2023 - 2024 (Appendix 1) sets out the key areas for collaborative action to bring about improvement across the Glasgow City Region.

The Director of Education intimated that work had been done on the key words to strengthen the plan and provide further recognition of the work involved.

The Education Committee approved the West Partnership's Improvement Plan for 2023 – 2024.

CHAIR

