

**Department of Business Operations and Partnerships**

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TO: Councillors A. Anderson (Chair), K. Pragnell (Vice Chair), T. Buchanan, K. Campbell, D. Devlin, C. Merrick, O. O'Donnell and G. Wallace; Ms F. Gilchrist; Ms D. Graham; Mr D. Morris; and Ms E Yedd.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Education Committee will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock, on **Thursday, 1 February 2024 at 10.00am**.

The agenda of business is as listed below.

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DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

**AGENDA**

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **Declarations of Interest.**
3. **Education Scotland Report on Barrhead High School – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 3 - 28).**
4. **Spotlight on Children and Young People's Wellbeing: Readiness to Learn – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 29 - 36).**
5. **Draft Standards and Quality Report 2022-2023 – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 37 - 62).**
6. **Draft Local Improvement Plan 2024-2027 – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 63 - 78).**
7. **2023-2028 Leadership Strategy – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 79 - 150).**

This document can be explained to you in other languages and can be provided in alternative formats such as large print and Braille. For further information, please contact Customer First on 0141 577 3001 or e-mail [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

A recording of the meeting will also be available following the meeting on the Council's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/eastrenfrewshire/videos>

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of EducationEDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON BARRHEAD HIGH SCHOOL**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To inform Education Committee of the report by Education Scotland on Barrhead High School.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Education Committee is asked to:

- a) note and comment on the outstanding Education Scotland report on Barrhead High School; and,
- b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from October 2023 until October 2026.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Barrhead High School was inspected by a team from Education Scotland in October 2023. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school and identified particular strengths and areas for improvement using the Education Scotland six-point scale and the self-evaluation framework *How Good is our School?*

4. Since August 2016, Education Scotland use 2 models of school inspection. The full and the short model.

5. The full model evaluates 4 quality indicators, with the short model focusing on 2. Both models include an evaluation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Raising Attainment and Achievement.

6. The school was inspected using the full model, with an evaluation for 4 quality indicators and a short report which details the strengths and areas for improvement. The report was published in January 2024 and is attached as Appendix 1. It has been issued to staff, parents, local elected members, the Convener for Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure and made available to the local community.

**REPORT**

7. In assessing the indicators of quality in the school, Education Scotland found 2 aspects of the work to be **excellent**: leadership of change and ensuring wellbeing, equality and

inclusion; and 2 areas to be **very good**: learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment and achievement.

8. This is an excellent report on an East Renfrewshire establishment, with the evaluations and report matching the department's evaluations.

9. The report highlights sector leading practice across Scotland and notes three areas worth sharing more widely nationally. These include:

- The collaborative whole school approach to leadership is a key strength worth sharing more widely. All staff and young people are involved in agreeing whole school priorities and in making changes for improvement.
- The approaches to involving partners to support all young people in a bespoke and inclusive manner is resulting in greater levels of inclusion and increased wellbeing for young people.
- The approaches to anti-bullying involving young people. This is enabling them to have a clear understanding of how to behave and how to self-manage. The result is a much lower incidence of bullying.

10. The particular strengths highlighted by the inspection team included:

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher in creating a culture where all staff and young people lead change and improvement effectively across the school.
- The very strong use of digital technology by teachers to motivate learners and provide them with very high quality feedback.
- The school's outstanding approach to seeking and acting upon the views of young people. Young people feel respected and highly valued. They are fully involved in decisions about important aspects of the daily life of the school.
- The school's excellent approach to working with partners to support and plan for young people's health and wellbeing.
- The very strong focus on the progress of young people. Staff use data exceptionally well to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their very best.

11. The achievements and progress of the children across the school were identified by the inspection team:

- *The school's vision, which was co-developed with stakeholders, has a strong focus on aspirations for all young people and improving their future life chances.*
- *A sector-leading approach to developing and sustaining partnership working ensures that the needs of individuals and groups of young people are very well met. Young people and their families are fully involved in decisions about interventions and targets as they work towards improved wellbeing outcomes.*

12. It was particularly pleasing that the commitment and professionalism of all school staff were highlighted in the Summary of Inspection Findings.

- *All staff demonstrate an exceptional use of professional learning to improve their practice. They undertake research, extensive and relevant professional reading and draw upon local and national policy and practice from across Scotland.*
- *The school's excellent joint support team, including school staff and partners, hold highly effective weekly meetings. They take a solution-focused approach to planning well-designed and supportive interventions for individual young people and very regularly review the impact of these interventions. As a result, school support staff have an outstanding level of knowledge about young people's health and wellbeing and the effectiveness of a very wide range of interventions. Young people's needs are being met in a way that respects their dignity.*

13. The inspection team identified 2 areas for improvement:

- Continue to build on highly effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Develop approaches to skills development so that young people can confidently discuss what they gain from their participation in wider achievements.

14. Given that the school has been judged to be excellent in two indicators assessed by Education Scotland, there is no need for an additional action plan to address the areas for improvement as noted above. The school will continue to use the results of its own self-evaluation to identify priorities for improvement which will be published in its annual standards and quality report and school plan.

15. The letter to parents/carers and more detailed summarised inspection findings is available on the [Education Scotland website](#).

16. The department will continue to work in partnership with the head teacher and staff to share the sector leading practices with other schools within East Renfrewshire and across Scotland.

17. Education Scotland will make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Barrhead High School and the Education Department recommends that the school be accredited for its achievements. This will mean that the authority will not carry out any formal quality assurance activities in Barrhead for a period of 3 years from the date of the publication of report, i.e. until October 2026.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

18. There are no financial or efficiency implications related to this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

19. Education Committee is asked to:

- a) note and comment on the contents of the Education Scotland report on Barrhead High School; and,

- b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from October 2023 until October 2026.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
1 February 2024

**Convener Contact Details**

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**Appendices**

1. Education Scotland Report on Barrhead High School
2. Education Scotland Letter to Parent/Carers

# Summarised inspection findings

**Barrhead High School**

East Renfrewshire Council

23 January 2024

## Key contextual information

School Name: Barrhead High School.  
Council: East Renfrewshire  
SEED number: 8626730  
Roll: 616

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In September 2022, 26% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2022, 31% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 44% of pupils had additional support needs.

38% of the learners live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1-3 areas and 25% live in SIMD 8-10.

There are 63 FTE teachers including seven Newly Qualified Teachers. There are 12 full-time pupil support staff. There are three deputy headteachers, nine curricular principal teachers, six pupil support principal teachers and three development principal teachers.

Over the last three sessions the school has recruited a deputy head and seven middle leaders. Seven new staff across the school started in August 2023.



### 1.3 Leadership of change

excellent

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher is held in very high regard by her staff, young people, parents and across the school community. She leads and manages change exceptionally successfully and skilfully. Her analysis of evidence and use of data helps to inform and evaluate relevant improvement priorities. Regular collaboration with all key stakeholders across the school and community further supports school improvement. The headteacher's clear, strategic direction for whole-school improvement is empowering all staff very well to develop the curriculum, pedagogy and self-evaluation activity. She has very high expectations of all members of the school community and a relentless focus on improving outcomes for all young people. Her calm, sensitive and considered approach enables a culture of confident collaboration, empowerment and leadership to be firmly embedded in the daily life and work of the school. The headteacher models the key value of respect very well and this underpins all relationships across the school. As a result, young people are very respectful, calm and well behaved.
- The headteacher plays a significant role in supporting system wide improvement. She currently chairs the local authority performance and reporting group. She presents at national conferences, for example, the national DYW event on curriculum pathways. The headteacher and her staff have also been involved in sharing good practice both within the local authority, in other local authorities and also nationally. The Education Scotland case study on learning ambassadors was published in 2022. This is leading to a staff group who are continually looking outwards to support improvement and to give back to the system.
- The school's vision, which was co-developed with stakeholders, has a strong focus on aspirations for all young people and improving their future life chances. This is captured very well through the school motto "# RaiseTheBarr." This vision results in a collective sense of purpose for all staff and young people in the school. Senior leaders empower staff at all levels to build and embed the strong vision and well-understood values.
- The school's shared vision informs improvement planning. Senior leaders use the vision to set priorities, make decisions, and evaluate the work of change initiatives. The vision is providing a clear sense of direction for the school and guiding decisions along the way. The school's very strong consultative, collaborative approach to strategic planning engages learners, parents, staff and partners effectively. Parents and stakeholders are fully involved in school improvement and kept up to date about the progress of the school improvement plan in a variety of ways. These include, for example, through online engagement, the Parent Council (PC) and the high-quality annual standards and quality report.
- There is a clear focus on well-considered improvement priorities and explicit references to aspirational outcomes for learners. This is driving a culture of very high expectations across the school community. As a result of highly effective approaches to planning and self-evaluation,

senior leaders are able to demonstrate clear improvements in expected outcomes over time. This includes strong attainment, highly effective learning and teaching, a well-balanced curriculum that meets the needs of young people, and young people who feel included in the life and work of the school.

- Faculty improvement plans are well aligned to the school improvement plan. Priorities at faculty level are well defined and driven through the rigorous approaches to self-evaluation. Local authority staff also support a rigorous and robust approach to self-evaluation activity through their collaborative faculty visits. Areas of strength and improvement are clearly identified as part of these visits and shared with all staff. Commendably, almost all middle leaders demonstrate improvements achieved against faculty improvement plan targets. Attainment is very strong across almost all departments and any areas for improvement are acted upon successfully.
- Senior and middle leaders work very well together to support the head teacher in driving change. They develop and inspire creativity and leadership in all staff and across faculties. This is helping to generate a culture of shared leadership across the school. Senior and middle leaders support faculties regularly to discuss the progress of improvement priorities, pupil tracking information and the outcomes from self-evaluation activities. Middle leaders provide very strong leadership within their faculties. Almost all teaching and support staff are empowered to initiate and lead key areas of change in faculties and across the school. These include, for example, the equalities group, the LGBT+ team and the Eco committee.
- All staff demonstrate an exceptional use of professional learning to improve their practice. They undertake research, extensive and relevant professional reading and draw upon local and national policy and practice from across Scotland. All teachers undertake a professional enquiry project linked to areas of development across the school. Staff then share the progress and impact of these projects with young people and colleagues. This helps to develop areas for whole school implementation. Teachers also undertake highly appropriate professional learning within the school and externally. All professional learning focuses on improving outcomes for all young people.
- Staff have a very strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. School staff's focus on fairness for all supports those young people most impacted by poverty. Staff know their families very well and are aware of the challenges they face. They also use data to identify individuals and groups who require additional support. Teachers monitor closely the progress made by individuals affected by additional challenges such as poverty, care experience or caring responsibilities. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) has been used well to improve attendance rates and the wellbeing of targeted learners.
- The school leadership team work highly effectively with partners to develop the senior phase curriculum to meet the needs of young people. Curriculum design aligns particularly well with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) priorities to meet the needs of learners and the local economy. SDS and DYW staff also work very closely with senior leaders and plan opportunities for learners. Senior and middle leaders regularly and robustly monitor activities and provision throughout the school year. They make adjustments where necessary to meet the needs of young people most effectively.
- Almost all young people are very clear on how sharing their views contributes significantly to affecting change and improvement. There are outstanding strengths in how young people lead improvement across the school. This includes how their views are acted upon on all aspects of school practice such as wellbeing, equality and diversity, aspects of learning and teaching help

to inform improvement. Staff seek the views of young people across the school regularly. They act upon these views which are a very strong feature of quality assurance and self-evaluation processes.

- The 'Learning Ambassadors' visit classes to observe learning and teaching. They discuss teaching and learning strategies with staff and contribute meaningfully to meetings about the learner experience and how it can be improved. A teaching and learning group of young people and staff meets regularly to discuss ideas around classroom environments, course content and learner engagement. These powerful and carefully considered inputs from young people underpin the school's self-evaluation processes and are driving changes in approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The very positive and nurturing ethos and culture within classrooms at Barrhead High School reflect the school's vision and values of 'RESPECT' and '#RaiseTheBarr'. These school values are underpinned by the school community's commitment to promoting the articles of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As a result, the school has achieved Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Gold award status. This leads to very positive relationships and a calm atmosphere in classrooms between staff and pupils.
- In the majority of lessons, young people participate well in learning activities. The majority of young people are very well motivated to achieve. In the majority of classes, young people take decisions, initiate tasks, ask questions and take control of their own learning. Teachers should build on this highly effective practice to ensure that all young people are actively engaged in the learning process more regularly. The learning and teaching group are well placed to take this forward.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers plan activities which provide appropriate challenge and support for learners. In most lessons, learning intentions are clear and relate well to the intended learning. This helps to focus formative assessment opportunities, such as self and peer assessment between young people. Most teachers model effective approaches to learning and share high quality pieces of work to exemplify what success looks like. Teachers create opportunities for young people to develop success criteria with each other. In the majority of lessons, young people have the opportunity to be active participants in a very good range of learning activities. In most lessons, staff use questioning well to check the understanding of young people and recall previous learning.
- 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.
- Staff use a variety of very effective assessment strategies and robust evidence to monitor the progress of young people at all stages. Teachers make very good use of a wide range of formative as well as summative assessment strategies. They use these to monitor progress and in the majority of classrooms adjust their planning to meet needs. Young people have regular opportunities to take part in a range of helpful peer and self-assessment activities.

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.

- A highly effective system of professional enquiry is used to promote improvement in learning and teaching and involves all teachers. Through this collaborative professional activity, teachers identify key areas for improvement linked to their professional review and development. This is very well supported by a teaching and learning group comprising staff from every faculty, as well as young people. An annual showcase event shares practice across all subject areas and this helps to inform faculty improvement planning. Peer evaluation and collaboration is embedded well across the school. This is leading to a shared understanding of what highly effective learning and teaching should look like. In supporting system wide improvement, young people in the school recently created a film for the west partnership with a focus on learning and teaching.
- Almost all teachers are confident when making assessment judgements of young people's learning in the broad general education (BGE). Teachers make very good use of tracking data to strengthen assessment judgements. They are currently working on a revised approach to moderation in the BGE which should also help to strengthen assessment judgements further. Teachers are looking outwards in their approach to moderation, leading to increased confidence in learning, teaching and assessment processes. Teachers are very confident when making assessment judgements in the senior phase. They have well-developed senior phase verification procedures in place to ensure that their judgements are valid and reliable.
- Teachers track the progress of individual learners very effectively and design timeous, appropriate interventions to support young people, including adaptations to their planning. The headteacher ensures tracking and monitoring data provides middle and senior leaders with a strategic overview of the progress of different cohorts of young people. This includes individual support and a wide range of study classes. As a result of these intervention strategies, almost all young people are supported very well to progress and achieve.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Secondary teachers are working very effectively with cluster primary teachers to develop a consistent approach to the data gathered in literacy and numeracy. Across the cluster, teachers gather standardised assessment data and teacher professional judgement data on young people's progress from primary school. This data is used as a baseline for secondary subject departments and helps them to design bespoke support strategies for young people as they move into S1. Senior leaders should continue to work with cluster colleagues to roll out this data analysis exercise to subject areas beyond literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers plan programmes and courses in the BGE linked to experiences and outcomes. They also make use of national benchmarks for assessments. In most curriculum areas in the BGE, teachers also plan learning against aspects of National Qualification requirements. Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that young people have the opportunity in all subject areas to experience their entitlement to a full, broad and deep BGE. This will allow them to develop more of the skills they require to be successful in their learning through the senior phase.
- Over the past five years in S2, the curriculum structure allows most young people to make choices to continue to study nine courses until the end of S4, five in S5 and three in S6. Senior leaders should ensure that there is sufficient scope for young people to change their pathways into S4. Almost all young people benefit from high quality conversations with principal teachers of pupil support (PTPS) when making choices in both the BGE and senior phase.
- Senior leaders and teachers are currently engaged in a robust review of the curriculum. Staff have designed the very useful 'Barrhead capacities' digital curriculum framework. This highlights very well the school's journey in making improvements to the curriculum. This is aimed at ensuring young people experience more consistent high quality courses where learning is challenging, enjoyable and relevant. As a next step, it is important to ensure that young people receive their full entitlement to study modern languages in line with Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy. In addition, senior leaders should also ensure that the delivery of religious and moral education (RME) aligns with the statutory requirement to deliver a coherent programme at all stages across the school. Young people experience their entitlement to high quality PE at all stages.
- The senior phase offers young people clear progression pathways for all curriculum areas and subjects. The school offers a range of qualifications from National 3 to Advanced Higher for young people. Commendably, teachers provide an increasing range of Advanced Highers that young people can access without the need to travel to consortium schools. Aspects of outdoor and interdisciplinary learning are an increasing strength of the school, improving the learning experiences and outcomes of targeted cohorts of young people.
- Staff who lead literacy and numeracy across the school have developed clear and effective strategies for the development and assessment of these as a responsibility for all in all curriculum areas.
- DYW and SDS staff monitor young people at risk of not achieving a positive destination at 'No One Left Behind' meetings. Staff at these meetings plan support interventions very well to encourage learner engagement. This is further supported through home visits by DYW staff to reach those who have disengaged completely from school. As a result, almost all young people move on to a positive destination.

- All senior phase learners can access vocational pathways delivered at several colleges or in purpose-built vocational facilities at the school. Enrolment numbers are strong and the programme successfully caters for partner secondary schools in the local authority area. This supports the school very well in achieving very high positive destination figures.
- Staff promote vocational programmes very well within course options provided to learners and parents. This demonstrates clearly the parity of esteem vocational programmes have with other course choices.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- A key strength at Barrhead High School is the involvement of parents in shaping the work of the school and empowering parents to lead aspects of improvement work. The Parent Council plays a prominent role in the life and work of the school. The headteacher works very closely with the Parent Council. The Parent Council has recently been involved in leading parental workshops to raise awareness of study skills and how parents can support their children's learning at home.
- Senior leaders ensure there is highly effective communication between the Parent Council and the wider parent body. Parent Council members have developed their own improvement plan which links very clearly to current whole-school priorities. This is an important strength and impacts very positively on young people, parents and stakeholders, as well as the wider school community.
- Almost all parents are positive about the strength of leadership and communication at Barrhead High School. Varied approaches to ensuring effective communication with parents and stakeholders and the impact this is having on young people's experiences is an important strength. For example, senior leaders and subject departments use a number of online platforms to promote school events and celebrate young people's achievements. Parents all highlight that any issues reported to the school are resolved quickly and discreetly. A strength of the school is how effectively staff communicate to young people and parents around feedback on homework and celebrations of learning.
- Almost all parents feel that they receive helpful, regular feedback about how their child is learning and progressing. Almost all parents report that the school gives them advice on how to support their child's learning at home. Senior leaders regularly seek and act upon the views of parents throughout the school year.



## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

excellent

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The school's highly inclusive values are at the heart of staff and young people's work on wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Young people are confident, articulate and inquisitive. Almost all young people believe that staff and their peers treat them fairly and with respect. This aspect of the school's work is of key importance in bringing about a wide range of positive outcomes relating to wellbeing, inclusion and equality.
- Most young people believe that the school is helping them to become more confident. This is due to the school's outstanding approach to seeking the views of young people on a range of matters. This includes young people providing staff with feedback on approaches to learning and teaching, curricular content and opportunities to develop wellbeing and inclusion. Young people, as a result, feel valued, included and listened to. Staff across the school actively seek out the views of their learners and act upon them to improve their experiences. This approach to empowering young people is an outstanding strength in the school. All young people feel a very strong sense of belonging at Barrhead High and feel that their views are appropriately considered.
- All young people feel that there are members of staff who know them well and to whom they can go with any concerns. Staff are proactive in following up concerns young people may have. Partners and the wider school support staff are very attentive to young people's needs.
- Young people benefit from a vibrant, relevant and responsive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, ensuring they are well informed to make positive and safer choices. Young people have contributed to the development of the PSHE programme. For example, they successfully negotiated the inclusion of learning about mental health and dealing with poverty. Young people demonstrate outstanding knowledge and understanding of personal and social education.
- Almost all young people participate very well in healthy activities in the school and community. These help young people understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles and to feel connected to the school community. For example, young people work closely with canteen staff to provide advice about menu choices that reflect healthy eating advice. The work of staff in this regard has received national recognition.
- Senior leaders and support staff have an excellent understanding of statutory duties and responsibilities. They have established rigorous and comprehensive systems to ensure that all young people, especially those facing additional barriers, are included, supported and challenged to attain and achieve.

- A sector-leading approach to developing and sustaining partnership working ensures that the needs of individuals and groups of young people are very well met. Young people and their families are fully involved in decisions about interventions and targets as they work towards improved wellbeing outcomes. Partners feel that they are fully involved in discussions about meeting young people's needs and regard the school's engagement with them as brave, creative and productive.
- Staff and young people support broader improvement through their ongoing work within and beyond the local authority. They recently presented on care experienced young people at a Scottish Attainment Challenge event. They also recently piloted a local authority wellbeing measurement toolkit and have been working collaboratively with Strathclyde University on pupil attendance. These experiences are empowering and enabling an outward looking approach.
- The school's excellent joint support team, including school staff and partners, hold highly effective weekly meetings. They take a solution-focused approach to planning well-designed and supportive interventions for individual young people and very regularly review the impact of these interventions. As a result, school support staff have an outstanding level of knowledge about young people's health and wellbeing and the effectiveness of a very wide range of interventions. Young people's needs are being met in a way that respects their dignity.
- Care experienced young people feel fully included in the school. They achieve positive outcomes as a result of the broad range of support packages that staff and partners provide. These packages are carefully tailored to meet the needs of the young people who are currently experiencing care or who have experienced care in the past. Commendably, a few of these young people have contributed to staff professional learning about corporate parenting by explaining their own experience of being in care.
- Young carers are all given the option to create their own personal statement and most of them have taken up this opportunity. As a result, they feel that their challenges are well understood by school staff and that they receive support when they need it.
- Staff, partners, young people and their families collaborate very effectively on well-written and comprehensive child's plans, when these are needed to formalise the support around individual young people. Targets in these plans are SMART and very well designed and are reviewed very regularly.
- Staff monitor the use of exclusions very carefully. Young people who have experienced exclusion are very well supported on return to school and feel respected as they re-engage with their school work. Partners, such as the campus police officer and the school's link educational psychologist, very effectively support young people who find themselves in this position. Specific interventions for targeted groups of young people are helping to keep the exclusion rate low. For example, young people involved in the Forest Schools initiative and the targeted Duke of Edinburgh Award group are becoming increasingly skilled in regulating their own behaviours.
- Staff collect a wide range of data about young people's wellbeing, using a sophisticated questionnaire based on the wellbeing indicators. The results of the questionnaire show that young people are increasingly resilient and connected to the school community. Young people are skilled in reflecting on their progress in relation to the wellbeing indicators and are very clear about how to seek support if their wellbeing is causing them concern.

- Young people have a strong understanding of the protected characteristics and are fully involved in ensuring that the school's culture is inclusive for all. For example, S1 young people organised an effective Diversity Day and the school equalities group is involved in planning a forthcoming information week on gender identity.
- The school deals very promptly and effectively with bullying incidents and have engaged very well with the wider school community to understand what constitutes bullying and how those involved will be supported. Almost all young people and parents who expressed a view believe bullying is dealt with well, or have never experienced bullying. The work done by school staff to deal with bullying is highly commendable. They take a proactive approach to reducing the likelihood of bullying incidents happening in a number of ways. For example, young people who feel they might be at risk of behaving inappropriately can take part in 'walk and talk' with a member of staff to help them to feel calmer. Young people in S4 have been trained as Mentors in Violence Prevention. They help others to understand the negative attitudes, beliefs and assumptions which can lie behind bullying behaviour. As a result, the incidence of bullying behaviour in the school is low. Almost all staff believe young people are well behaved and that any bullying incidents are dealt with effectively.
- Young people have frequent opportunities to reflect on their views of equality and diversity in a range of subject areas across the school. Staff adjust subject content to reinforce the school's commitment to challenging discrimination and prejudice. For example, staff in social subjects have introduced work on the civil rights movement, and in English young people have been able to influence the texts they study to reflect their interest in anti-racism. Young people make important contributions to the development of courses in personal, social and health education. This exemplary work illustrates the centrality of young people as they support the school community to become increasingly inclusive. Young people are given encouragement to share their views and act as positive role models for others.

**3.2 Raising attainment and achievement****very good**

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

**Attainment in literacy and numeracy****BGE**

- Almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy by the end of S3 in 2021/22. Most young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy. Almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in numeracy by the end of S3 in 2022/23. A majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy. The school have maintained high levels of performance in literacy and numeracy in recent years.
- Data from primary 7 is shared with all staff and literacy and numeracy leads use the data to plan an appropriate curriculum. Staff across the school have a shared approach to aspects of literacy and numeracy. This supports young people across all areas of the curriculum.

**Senior phase**

- The school is above the virtual comparator (VC) for the proportion of young people in S4 who are dual presented in one and two subjects for both National 4 and National 5. Staff should review the proportions of young people who are presented for two courses in one subject area in order to ensure appropriate progress and workload for young people.

**Leavers**

- Almost all young people leave school with SCQF level 4 or better in literacy. The school has maintained these high standards over the last five years (2017/18 to 2021/22). Most young people leave school with SCQF level 5 or better and the majority so at SCQF level 6 or better. Attainment is generally in line with the VC across these measures.
- Overall, between 2017/18 and 2021/22, almost all young people leave school with SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. A majority do so at SCQF level 5 or better and a minority do so at SCQF level 6. Attainment is generally in line with the VC across these measures.

**Cohorts**

- Performance in literacy at S4, by S5 and by S6 is strong. In literacy, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 4 or better and most achieved SCQF level 5 or better. The school has improved attainment at SCQF level 5 over the five year period with attainment being generally significantly much higher and higher at these levels when compared with the VC. Over the latest five year period, attainment in literacy by S5 and by S6 is also generally significantly much higher and higher than the VC. By S5 and by S6, the majority achieved SCQF level 6 which is significantly higher than the VC.

- Performance in numeracy at S4 is strong. In S4 in numeracy, there are clear improvements in attainment at SCQF level 5 from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The school has performed significantly higher and much higher than the VC in the latest three years. There is a notable difference between the success young people have in achieving numeracy through units when compared to the percentage who achieve this through a course award at S4, by S5 and by S6. This remains an important area for improvement.

### Improving attainment for all

#### BGE

- Staff in departments track attainment within CfE levels very well and this supports planning for interventions. Teachers track attainment across all stages of the senior phase very thoroughly. They have detailed data and information to support individuals and cohorts, and this enables interventions to be well planned. As a result, young people are achieving very well.
- By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third CfE level or better in all other curriculum areas outwith literacy and English, and numeracy and Mathematics. The high percentage of young people attaining at these levels has been sustained in recent years.

#### Leavers

- Attainment of young people leaving school is in line with the VC for 2017/18 to 2020/21. This includes the lowest attaining 20% of young people, the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20%. In 2021/22, the attainment of young people in the lowest 20% was higher than the VC and those in the middle 60% attained much higher than the VC.

#### Cohorts

- In S4, the lowest attaining 20% of young people have performed significantly much higher and higher than the VC in four of the last five years. By S5 and by S6, the lowest attaining 20% generally perform in line with the VC apart from two years out of five, where performance was significantly higher than the VC. The middle attaining 60% of young people have performed significantly much higher than the VC consistently over the last five years in S4. By S5 and S6, the middle attaining 60% of young people perform significantly much higher and higher than the VC. In S4, by S5 and S6, the highest attaining 20% of young people perform in line with the VC. This does not include two years by S5 where performance was significantly higher than the VC. There is no consistent pattern of improvement for this measure.

#### Breadth and depth

- In S4, almost all young people achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better. This is significantly much higher than the VC in four out of the last five years. The majority of young people achieve six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better which remains consistently significantly much higher than the VC over the last five year period. A minority of young people achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better. This is also significantly higher than the VC over the last five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23.
- By S5, the majority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better from 2019/20 to 2022/23. This is significantly much higher and higher than the VC. A majority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better over the five year period. This is generally significantly much higher than the VC. The majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better which has been significantly much higher than the VC.

- By S6, a majority of young people attained six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This is significantly much better than the VC from 2018/19 to 2022/23. Performance at SCQF level 5A or better is also strong and significantly much higher than the VC in the latest two years. The majority of young people attained four or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in the latest three years from 2020/21 to 2022/23. This is significantly much higher than the VC. At SCQF 6A or better, young people generally perform significantly higher than the VC. A few young people attained one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better which is generally in line with the VC.
- At S4 in 2022/23, 68% of young people were presented for 9 courses yet only 56% attained at SCQF level 4 or better and 21% attained at SCQF level 5C or better for 9 or more courses. Senior leaders explained the aspirational approach to presentation for a number of young people. The school should continue to review the number of courses young people are presented for in relation to their attainment levels.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Effective use of data is ensuring that the school is well informed about the achievements of young people in school and in the community. If participation drops, staff have an early conversation with the young person to understand the barriers and ensure that the offer is meeting their needs. As a result, most young people are gaining new skills, developing their confidence and improving peer relationships. A few young people are not yet involved in any activities. The school should continue to build on the tracking system to highlight the skills gained through participation in clubs.
- The Positive Parenting programme is supporting young people to consider their future choices. Through the RespectER programme, a targeted intervention for young people displaying risk taking behaviour, young people are increasing engagement in learning, building communication and resilience skills. Young people who were specifically targeted to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award have successfully completed their silver award. As a result, young people are more confident to consider further volunteering and employment. Whilst a range of accredited awards, such as Saltire, John Muir, Duke of Edinburgh are in place, the offer to young people is much broader. Young people would benefit from accreditation of existing activities to gain externally validated recognition for their skills and achievements.
- The positive and respectful relationships between young people, staff and key partners such as youth workers is valued by young people. Young people are confident to approach staff and youth workers if they need further support with any aspect of their life. At the Friday Club, school staff often participate in sports activities led and coached by young people. This joint activity is continuing to build relationships between teachers and young people, resulting in improved engagement in learning.
- Volunteering and leadership are supporting further education aspirations and career in school and in the community. For example, young people plan and lead a range of sports sessions through the Sports Leaders Academy. They support younger peers in school and attend local primaries to support transition work. This has also led to paid employment.
- There is a consistent and embedded approach to celebrating young people's successes. Recognition of achievement, both in school and in the community, is linked with the school values of RESPECT. Regular postings on social media, on school notice boards and at assemblies is an ongoing positive experience for young people. In addition to monthly certificates, the effective tracking of achievements produces a certificate presented at an

annual celebration event. As a result, young people feel recognised, supported and encouraged.

### Equity for all learners

- The attainment of young people leaving school living in SIMD decile one, using complementary tariff points, is in line with the national figure in the latest year 2021/22. The attainment of young people living in SIMD decile two has been significantly much higher in two of the last five years. Senior leaders and teachers have robust strategies in place to ensure that no young person is at risk of underperforming as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. SIMD data is analysed and discussed regularly by senior leaders and teachers. Staff can link this data confidently to identify potential links to the lowest, middle and highest attaining cohorts of young people. This is helping to ensure that staff are equipped with strategies to support all cohorts of young people to be as successful as they can be, and to remove potential barriers to their success and learning experiences.
- Senior leaders have deployed resources using PEF funding well to appoint additional staffing to key support posts. This is having a positive impact on the outcomes of targeted groups of learners. Senior leaders should continue to ensure the sustainability of the very valuable achievements and improvements that have arisen as a result of these additional resources. The deputy headteacher recently delivered a presentation at a national DYW event to the cabinet minister in relation to raising attainment and improving school destinations.
- Initial leaver destinations are positive with almost all young people entering a positive destination over the last five years. In the last two years, 2020/21 and 2021/22, the school performed significantly much higher than the VC where young people achieved a positive destination. This is over 4% higher than the VC.



## Practice worth sharing more widely

The collaborative whole school approach to leadership is a key strength worth sharing more widely. All staff and young people are involved in agreeing whole school priorities and in making changes for improvement. The approaches to involving partners to support all young people in a bespoke and inclusive manner is resulting in greater levels of inclusion and increased wellbeing for young people. The approaches to anti-bullying involving young people. This is enabling them to have a clear understanding of how to behave and how to self-manage. The result is a much lower incidence of bullying.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

23 January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2023, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Barrhead High School. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher in creating a culture where all staff and young people lead change and improvement effectively across the school. These changes are well informed by robust approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. All members of the school community are highly committed to creating the very best experiences for young people. The school vision underpins all of the work of the school and drives a culture of very high expectations.
- The very strong use of digital technology by teachers to motivate learners and provide them with very high quality feedback. As a result, young people enjoy learning, and are able to confidently discuss their strengths and their next steps. Commendably, parents/carers are also able to access a digital platform to further support learning at home.
- The school's outstanding approach to seeking and acting upon the views of young people. Young people feel respected and highly valued. They are fully involved in decisions about important aspects of the daily life of the school. This approach to empowering young people is resulting in a strong sense of belonging and high levels of motivation.
- The school's excellent approach to working with partners to support and plan for young people's health and wellbeing. Supports are planned carefully with the full involvement of young people and families. This ensures that the needs of individuals and groups of young people are a high priority and are very well met.
- The very strong focus on the progress of young people. Staff use data exceptionally well to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their very best. As a result, attainment is very strong and young people at all stages make very good progress in their learning.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from East Renfrewshire Council.

- Continue to build on highly effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Develop approaches to skills development so that young people can confidently discuss what they gain from their participation in wider achievements.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4<sup>th</sup> edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

## Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Barrhead High School

Quality indicators	Evaluation
<b>Leadership of change</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Learning, teaching and assessment</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Raising attainment and achievement</b>	<b>very good</b>
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: <a href="#">How good is our school? (4<sup>th</sup> edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale</a>	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

[Details](#) | [Find an inspection report](#) | [Find an inspection report](#) | [Inspection and Review](#) | [Education Scotland](#)

### What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. East Renfrewshire Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Ann Floyd  
HM Inspector

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of EducationSPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING: READINESS  
TO LEARN**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a spotlight for Education Committee on elements of the ongoing work being undertaken by the Education Department and our early learning and childcare settings and schools to support children and young people's wellbeing through readiness to learn.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the spotlight regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Education Department's vision statement "*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*" outlines the commitment and expectation that all learners will be supported to realise their potential.

4. Article 28 of the UNCRC states that children and young people have the right to education and that education should develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (Article 29).

5. In order to achieve this, we need to ensure that all children and young people are ready and able to learn. Readiness to learn is a fundamental concept in education that refers to a child or young persons' ability and motivation to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes and participate in the life of the school. It encompasses various aspects, including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical readiness.

6. Committee will be aware of the year 1 evaluation report [Progress and Impact on Implementation of Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2022-26](#) which provided Education Committee with an update of progress related to the Strategic Equity Plan. This spotlight shines a light on key areas of readiness to learn in supporting children and young people's wellbeing and specifically their emotional, social and physical readiness and a full evaluation of the Strategic Equity Fund will be provided at the end of year 2. This paper will be complimented by presentations provided by Arthurlie Family Centre, East Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service and St Ninian's High School.

7. The [Improving Outcomes Through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding: Strategic Equity Plan 2023-2024](#) was approved at the September 2023 Education Committee and highlights the key actions related to readiness to learn.

8. A key measure of success as highlighted through the stretch aims is attendance in schools. Attendance in schools plays a pivotal role in shaping the attainment, achievement

and overall wellbeing of our children and young people. Regular attendance is not only a requirement but also a foundation for a student's educational journey. It is a crucial aspect that directly impacts academic achievement, social interactions, and future opportunities.

9. Although overall levels of attendance in East Renfrewshire are high, and favourable nationally, last session the stretch aim was not met and there is an ongoing drive to return to pre-pandemic levels of attendance.

## REPORT

10. The Improving Outcomes through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding: Strategic Equity Plan 2023-2024 highlights the following key actions related to readiness to learn:

- Early Intervention and prevention for secondary aged pupils experiencing emotionally based school avoidance;
- Comprehensive CLPL programme;
- Enhance partnership working to ensure pupils are well equipped to learn and engage in school;
- Implement Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2025;
- Develop and implement a Social Justice Strategy;
- Promote digital inclusion;
- Expand and enhance the Healthier Minds Service to ensure an ongoing commitment to supporting the mental health, wellbeing, attainment and achievement of children and young people; and,
- Implement the recommendations from the department's ASN review.

11. The Learn Well Service has been established to support young people with their wellbeing and education while they are not attending school for reasons relating to Emotionally Based School Absence (EBSA). The Service works in close partnership with the young person, their family and school to ensure that their educational needs are met and that a range of opportunities remains open to them. In addition, the service offers extracurricular activities aimed at young people and their families to encourage positive engagement within the family unit and participation in wider social experiences. The service aims to improve outcomes for young people and help them to recognise their own potential.

12. The Learn Well Service was created by combining resources from different funding streams, including the Strategic Equity Fund, Care Experienced Children and Young People's Fund and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. This has allowed the creation of a diverse team to support the different wellbeing needs of our most vulnerable learners, many of whom are care experienced or neurodiverse. The Service comprises one Outreach Teacher, one Pupil Support Assistant, one Neurodevelopmental Support Worker) and 1.5 Children 1st Project Workers. Together, the team have supported 26 young people through the Strategic Equity fund pathway and a further 11 young people through the Care Experienced Fund pathway. Intensive support is offered through home visits, one to one sessions, group support and online learning.

13. The Education Psychology Service has developed evaluation tools for the Learn Well Service in order to measure how young people feel about their health, wellbeing and education, this allows tracking of impact on health and wellbeing alongside other data such as participation. Data has highlighted the following impact:

- Almost all (90%+) of the young people have shown increased resilience and a willingness to engage in education. They have all pushed themselves out of their comfort zone with the support of the Learn Well team.
- Almost all (90%+) have engaged with learning activities appropriate to their age and stage.

14. The work of the Learn Well Service was recently the subject of a good practice visit from the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise.

15. A range of professional learning opportunities has been developed to support wellbeing and readiness to learn and evaluations of these sessions have highlighted they have increased practitioner confidence and knowledge. These sessions include:

- Trauma Informed, Nurturing and Attachment Based Approaches
- Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Promoting Attendance, Engagement and Achievement
- Inclusive Practices
- Suicide Prevention and Self Harm

16. In order to support readiness to learn in the early years, the Educational Psychology Team have implemented an initiative called 'Bucket Time'. Bucket Time aims to develop joint attention, communication and interaction skills of children with Autism Spectrum Condition and other additional support needs. 132 early years' practitioners across 24 ELCC settings within East Renfrewshire have received Bucket Time training and evaluations of the programme have highlighted that it is having a positive impact on children's ability to communicate, interact and focus.

17. Work has continued linked to the [Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy](#) and has focused on 3 key themes:

- Communicate
- Collaborate
- Consult

18. Family Centred Approaches is a self-evaluation framework used by our education establishments to assess how well they involve and engage with families across their communities. Seven more ELC settings achieved Gold Family Focused status this year and four more primary schools achieved Gold status.

19. East Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Service have developed an East Renfrewshire Strathclyde Family Wellbeing Scale (ERSFWS) to measure family wellbeing in order to measure and track family wellbeing effectively. The research undertaken when developing the ERSFWS was presented at the International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare, Copenhagen May 2023. This Scale now being used routinely to inform and measure the family wellbeing support undertaken by Family First, Healthier Minds and the Learn Well Service allowing the measurement of a range of indicators including relationships, coping with stress and family connectedness.

20. The [Social Justice Strategy and Framework](#) which was approved at 20 April Education Committee, aims to improve the equality, diversity and inclusiveness of education in order to meet the needs of all. The framework and strategy bring together practical guidance and signpost resources to help schools promote social justice through six key areas of practice: curriculum design; learning, teaching and assessment; relationships; professional learning and development; recruitment and retention; and use of resources.

21. The [Review of the Impact of Pupil Equity Funding](#) report shared at Education Committee in Sept 23 highlights key actions schools are taking linked to the Social Justice Framework and makes specific reference to work related to reducing the cost of the school day including the following; *'The majority of plans for 2022-23 included details of how the school is reducing the Cost of the School Day (CoSD), while qualitative evidence demonstrates that most schools are already working to reduce costs to families in a variety of ways....17 schools have engaged with support offered through the CoSD school leads online group since 2021 and CoSD approaches are becoming well embedded in the work of the majority of schools.'*

22. The key areas outlined in the strategy align closely with wellbeing and readiness to learn and include:

- Improve knowledge, understanding and skills related to social justice;
- Improve equity in attainment and achievement;
- Improve recognition of diverse identities in curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment;
- Improve the representation of diverse children, young people, families and staff in the life and work of settings and schools; and,
- Reduce barriers which limit the involvement and engagement of specific groups of children and young people, parents and carers and staff.

23. Digital inclusion remains a priority ensuring equitable access for all to support education and participation. An example of this is our approach to hospital education which is now being delivered in partnership with the Glasgow Hospital Education Team. Education for children in hospital now includes:

- Provision of devices;
- Support from the Learn Well Team;
- Google Classroom, Google Meet and other online platforms Online learning provided by school;
- Telephone conversations;
- Internet resources; and,
- Reduced Face to Face teaching from the Glasgow Hospital Education Team.

24. Mental health continues to be a key aspect of the curriculum with approaches such as 'Compassionate and Connected Classrooms' and 'Emotion Works' being adopted as a whole school approach. Commendably many of our secondary schools have developed wellbeing hubs to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people and provide a safe nurturing space for children and young people to be supported.

25. The Educational Psychology Service and multi-agency partners have continued to support children's mental and emotional wellbeing through the Healthier Minds Service. 44 multi-agency screening hubs took place where 376 children and young people were discussed. 94% of the children and young people who received support from the Healthier Minds team reported improved outcomes. The service worked closely with schools and Community Learning and Development (CLD) in order to support young people to access relevant provision and support, including community-based supports.

26. The Healthier minds website has been updated and developed to continue to promote mental wellbeing and support children and young people, parents and practitioners across East Renfrewshire. Information and resources have been added in the following areas:



- ASD and Girls
- Supporting Unaccompanied Minors
- Supporting Young People with High Levels of Anxiety
- LGBTQIA+
- Bereavement Support for Practitioners

27. Following the review of [Additional Support for Learning in East Renfrewshire](#) and subsequent recommendations which were approved at the February 2022 Education Committee, 4 work streams have been established comprising of colleagues across different sectors and provisions and are working on the following themes:

- Vision
- Culture and Climate
- Specialist Provision
- Professional Learning.

28. Key achievements to date include the establishment of a Communication Support Centre in Carolside Primary School; redesign of the Social Emotional Behaviour Needs Outreach Team to include an enhanced Nurture provision within Carlibar Primary School; creation of a vision for ASN learners in East Renfrewshire, update of Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and approaches including review of Behaviour Support Strategies (BSS) and developing CLPL on Keeping Trauma in Mind, and developing a CLPL programme for Pupil Support Assistants.

29. As highlighted in the introduction, attendance is a key measurement of success related to wellbeing and readiness to learn. Committee will be aware from the [Progress and Impact on Implementation of Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2022-26 Report](#) that overall, attendance in the Primary Sector increased in 2022-23 to 94.4% from 93.9% in 2021-22. This compares favourably with the national average of 92.2%. Overall attendance in the secondary sector was recorded as 91.1% which is 0.3% less than 2021-22 and the lowest recorded in the past six years. This does however compare favourably with the national average which is 87.7%. Although when comparing overall attendance with all other education authorities, East Renfrewshire is the highest we are ambitious to improve our attendance.

30. Analysis undertaken at the end of Term 1 (August – Oct) this session compared to end year attendance over the past 8 years shows an improving picture. Key improvements include:

- Primary attendance has risen from 94.4% in 2022/23 to 96.3% in October 23 and secondary attendance has increased from 91.1% in 2022/23 to 93.2% in October 23;
- The average rate of attendance for the primary learners entitled to free school meals has increased to pre- pandemic levels of attendance for this point in the year and is currently 92.6%. The gap between children receiving a free school meal has reduced from a 5% last session to a current 4% gap.
- In secondary schools it was 86.4% compared to 83.8% last session. The gap between children receiving a free school meal remains similar to last session and is 7.6%.
- The attendance of primary children in quintile 1 has increased to 93% and the gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 has reduced from 5.2% last session to 4%.

- In secondary schools the attendance of children in quintile 1 has increased to 86.2% however the gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 has increased from 6.8% last session to 8.4% currently as all quintile groups continue to increase.
- October 23 data highlights the highest values for both male and females in primary schools since the pandemic with no gender gap. It has also improved for both boys and girls in secondary schools with boys' attendance around 1% higher.
- In primaries the gap between ethnic minority learners has reduced from 2% to 0.5% from figures recorded in 2022/23. In secondary schools last year there was not an ethnic minority attendance gap, however this year this has increased with an ethnic minority learners' average attendance of 94.3% compared to 92.9% for all other pupils.
- The % of primary school children with very high attendance (98% and above) has increased from 26.2% last session to 48.5%. The % of children with exceptionally low and low attendance (below 85%) has decreased from 15.2% last year to 11.3%.
- In secondary schools the % of children with very high attendance has increased from 13.9% last session to 36%. The % of children with exceptionally low and low attendance has decreased from 27.9% last year to 20.9%.

31. Attendance is just one measure of impact related to wellbeing and readiness to learn. As highlighted in paragraph 19, a Family Wellbeing Scale has been developed to measure family wellbeing. In addition to this, the Education Psychology Service have developed a Health and Wellbeing assessment for primary and secondary schools which is currently being piloted by the Barrhead Cluster of schools. This assessment has been developed to measure resilience, school connectedness and wellbeing. The assessment covers themes such as attitudes to learning, sense of belonging, friendships and managing emotions. Following the pilot period, these assessments will be rolled out across all schools.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

32. A range of different funding streams have been accessed in order to support the various areas highlighted in this report. These include:

- Strategic Equity Fund
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- Care Experienced Children and Young People Attainment Fund
- Counselling in Schools Funding
- Community Mental Health for Children and Young People

33. In addition to this, schools benefit from Pupil Equity Funding and many have used this to focus on activities related to wellbeing and readiness to learn.

## **CONSULTATION**

34. The department has carried out extensive engagement on the different areas identified within this report, for example, as part of the development of the social justice strategy, stakeholders including parents, carers, children and young people and education staff were consulted on a range of themes related to social justice.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

35. Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessments have been undertaken to support the development of the different areas discussed through this report.

## CONCLUSION

36. There are a number of factors which impact on children and young people's readiness to learn and recognising and addressing these are vital in creating an environment and experiences that meets the diverse needs of our children and young people. By employing strategies as highlighted in this report, we are improving their readiness to learn which in turn contributes to their overall academic success and personal development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

37. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the update regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
1 February 2024

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of EducationDRAFT STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2022 - 2023**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To inform Education Committee of the proposed contents of the Education Department's annual Standards and Quality Report for school session 2022 - 2023.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Education Committee is asked to:

- a) Comment on the content of the annual Standards and Quality Report; and,
- b) Ask the Director of Education to make any amendments and take the necessary steps to produce and issue copies of the report for stakeholders.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Under the terms of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 education authorities have a duty to produce and publish annually a Local Improvement Plan which details how it and its schools and services will continuously improve, and, based on this plan, a Standards and Quality Report detailing how it has sought and achieved improvements in provision.

4. The Local Improvement Plan, upon which this report is based, was approved by Education Committee in February 2022 and reflected the National Outcomes for Education, the Council's Community Plan and the department's contributions to the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 – 2024. The plan lists the expected outcomes and impact and is organised under the department's vision statement "*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*". The draft Standards and Quality Report reflects the three key themes of the vision and evaluates the action taken and the improvements achieved as a result.

5. The draft Standards and Quality Report provides evidence of the progress the department and ELC settings and schools have made in supporting all learners, with a particular focus on inequalities of outcome experienced by our more disadvantaged children and young people. The report also details the improvements we have made towards the five national priorities as set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF).

## REPORT

6. The department has undertaken a self-evaluation exercise which has informed the draft report. This evaluation has helped to outline our next steps which will be fed into the next Local Improvement Plan that is the subject of a separate report to Education Committee.

7. The draft included as Appendix 1, highlights the very good and excellent standards and practice achieved by the department, its schools and services and is offered as a public record of some of the activities which were undertaken during the last school session, and their impact on stakeholders.

8. Evidence for the Standards and Quality Report is gathered annually through a range of activities designed to provide support and challenge to schools and ELC settings. Evidence for the 2022-23 report was gathered from the following sources:

- performance and questionnaire data
- reports on schools and early learning and childcare settings from the Quality Improvement Team; Education Scotland reports on schools and services
- reports on Early Learning and Childcare Settings by Care Inspectorate Scotland
- school and service improvement plans and Standards and Quality Reports

9. Following feedback, the format of the 2022 - 2023 report has again been designed to provide a more concise, visual and high level summary of the progress made in implementing the 2022 - 25 Local Improvement Plan.

10. With committee approval, the Department plans to issue the report electronically to all parents of children attending an East Renfrewshire school or Early Learning and Childcare setting. A limited number of copies of the published report will also be available in all libraries, education, sports and cultural centres and Council buildings, and will also be available to be viewed online or downloaded from the Council's website.

## FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no financial or efficiency implications arising from this report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Education Committee is asked to:

- a) Comment on the content of the annual Standards and Quality Report; and,
- b) Ask the Director of Education to make any amendments and take the necessary steps to produce and issue copies of the report for parents.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
1 February 2024

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**Appendix**

1. Draft Standards and Quality Report 2022 - 2023

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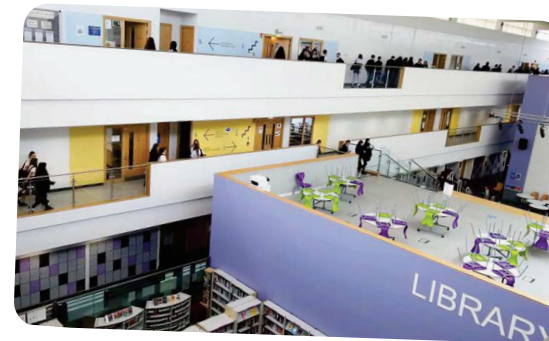
# Standards and Quality Report 2022-23



Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

## Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

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**EVERYONE  
ATTAINING**

**EVERYONE  
ACHIEVING  
EXCELLENT  
EXPERIENCES**



# Foreword

East Renfrewshire Council continues to prioritise education as a key service and is committed to providing the highest quality for all our residents. This Standards and Quality Report clearly shows the progress made in achieving our expected outcomes and impact in the past year and demonstrates the ongoing culture of improvement within the department and across our early learning and childcare settings, schools and services.

Evidence has been gathered by the Quality Improvement Team, through self-evaluation activities, which has enabled the department to identify next steps and continue to provide the highest quality of experiences for all our learners. These next steps will be undertaken over the next three sessions through implementation of our Local Improvement Plan 2024-27.

External evaluation is carried out by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate who, in visiting our schools and centres, commented very favourably on the practice they observed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for their efforts and acknowledge that relentless focus on meeting the priorities set by the Council and at a national level through the National Improvement Framework.



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The Education Department remains fully committed to meeting the needs of the General Equality Duty, as outlined by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, through eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. This responsibility, alongside the commitment to the council's values of ambition, kindness and trust are clearly evident throughout this report.

This Standards and Quality report is a tribute to the many superb achievements of East Renfrewshire's Education Department, its early learning and childcare settings, schools and services and the progress made in the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in session 2022-23.

**Councillor Andrew Anderson,**  
Convener of Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure



I am pleased to share with you our Standards and Quality Report 2022-23. We celebrate here the impressive achievements of children and young people and recognise the success of our early learning and childcare settings, schools, services and staff. The ambition shown by our staff, children and young people has been outstanding and has ensured that we have continued to make improvements and deliver the highest quality service.

The Education Department is fully committed to continuous improvement and its vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*. We seek to provide the highest quality education and services to children, young people and adults within East Renfrewshire. Our Standards and Quality report is structured under this vision and details



# Introduction

progress during session 2022-23 towards each of the target outcomes and impacts detailed in the Education Department's Local Improvement Plan for 2022-25. This report also demonstrates clearly the progress we have made towards the five national priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.

The report demonstrates the progress we have made and the enormous contributions and improvements made by our learners, staff and partners with many notable successes. We have taken opportunity to pause and reflect on our priorities to ensure we meet the needs of all our learners and respond to new challenges. Through the self-evaluation activities which have informed this report, the department has identified next steps and these will be taken forward over the next three sessions through implementation of our Local Improvement Plan 2024-27.

I hope you find this Standards and Quality Report for 2022-23 provides you with a clear insight to how we work in partnership, set the highest expectations and ambitions for all in order that we deliver our vision and achieve excellence through equity for all.

**Mark Ratter,**  
Director of Education



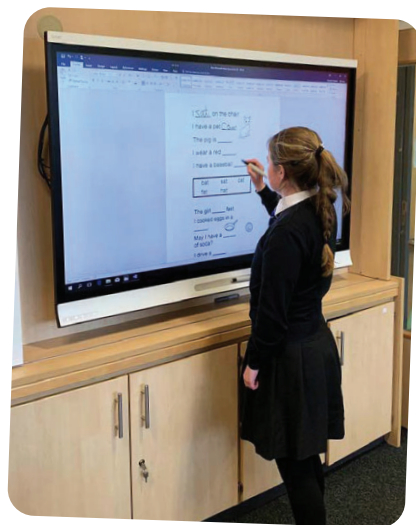
# Background Information

## About the Education Department

In 2022-23, East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department provided an education service through seven secondary schools, twenty-four primary schools, of which thirteen have nursery classes, ten family centres and one school for children and young people with additional support needs. The Education Department also has responsibility for Adult Learning and Facilities Management.

## About the Standards and Quality Report

The Standards and Quality Report details the progress made towards achieving the outcomes and impact set out in the Education Department's Local Improvement Plan 2022-25. The Local Improvement Plan is organised under the Education Department's vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* and has a clear focus on outcomes and impact on learners, parents and carers, staff and the community.



**Evidence for the Standards and Quality Report is gathered annually through a range of activities designed to provide support and challenge to schools and ELC settings. Evidence for the 2022-23 report was gathered from the following sources:**

- performance and questionnaire data
- reports on schools and early learning and childcare settings from the Quality Improvement Team;
- Education Scotland reports on schools and services
- reports on Early Learning and Childcare Settings by Care Inspectorate Scotland
- school and service improvement plans and Standards and Quality Reports

**This report is also informed by:**

- the Education Department's Outcome Delivery Plan
- the Scottish Government's GIRFEC wellbeing indicators: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included
- The Promise
- the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan
- the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The results of this self-evaluation will be used to plan the next steps, inform the main themes of our Strategic Equity Funding Plan 2022-26 and will be incorporated into the next Local Improvement Plan 2024-27.

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## Schools and Services Inspected in 2022-23

During session 2022-23, a series of inspections took place to evaluate and report on standards and quality.

## Education Scotland

Education Scotland resumed their inspections in August 2022 and carried out national thematic inspections of inclusion and promoting positive behaviour, curriculum design and 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare Expansion. Four East Renfrewshire establishments were selected for inspection and three were chosen to be part of the national thematic reviews:

- Braidbar Primary School and Nursery Class
- Crookfur Primary School and Family Centre
- Eastwood High School
- Hazeldene Family Centre
- Mearns Primary School and Nursery Class
- Neilston Primary School and Madras Family Centre
- Overlee Family Centre

## Care Inspectorate

The following early learning and childcare settings underwent an inspection by the Care Inspectorate:

- Carolside Nursery Class
- Glenwood Family Centre
- Overlee Family Centre
- Eaglesham Nursery Class
- Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class

# Schools & Services Inspected

## Standards & Quality and Thematic Reviews

The authority's Quality Improvement Team also carries out reviews which focus on aspects of provision.

A thematic review of the impact of Pupil Equity Funding on children and young people experiencing poverty in East Renfrewshire took place, looking at specific areas which reflect the key priorities set out by Scottish Government.

Establishments in the Woodfarm Cluster (Glen Family Centre, Braidbar Primary School, Giffnock Primary School, Thornliebank Primary School, and Woodfarm High School) took part in a pilot of the Cluster Collaborative Improvement Visit model which replaced the Effective Transitions Review. The focus of the visits was agreed collaboratively by the cluster and the visiting team and had a consistent focus on learning and teaching and raising attainment for all. Collaborative Improvement aims to promote partnership working to ensure that we achieve sustainable improvements for all children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Collaborative Improvement Visits took place at St Joseph's Primary School and Eaglesham Primary School and Nursery Class.

Collaborative Improvement Visits took place in all secondary schools Science and Health and Wellbeing departments.



# Everyone Attaining

## NIF Priority 5: Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy

East Renfrewshire continues to advance equity and excellence as demonstrated through a wide range of local and national attainment measures. Our children and young people achieve exceptionally high standards of attainment throughout the broad general education and senior phase.



### Senior Phase Attainment

Pupils across East Renfrewshire excelled in SQA qualifications with another year of outstanding results. We have continued to raise attainment with very strong Higher and Advanced Higher results and record equalling performance in S4. These achievements are a tribute to the hard work and commitment of pupils, and the collected efforts and support of their parents and school staff.

#### Key achievements include:

- 81% of S4 pupils attained 5 or more awards at National 5 or better, up from 78% in 2019.
- Best ever proportion of grade A awards at SQA National 5 in S4 this year; currently 61%. The presentation rate also increased for this measure this session.
- Increase in the proportion of learners achieving 8+ National 5 and National 5As in S4 to 59% and 28% respectively.
- Proportion of A-C passes at Higher in S5 remained the same compared to 2022 and 2019.
- 47% of S5 pupils attained 5 or more awards at Higher
- 69% of S5 pupils attained 3 or more awards at Higher
- 203 S5 pupils attained 5 or more A awards at Higher – 16% of the original S4 year group
- At Advanced Higher, 46% of S6 pupils achieved one or more awards (an increase of 6% since 2019); 21% of learners achieved at least one AH at grade A.

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- ✓ Woodfarm and Williamwood High Schools all achieved outstanding best ever S4 results. Mearns Castle, St Luke's and St Ninian's High Schools all saw the proportion of S4 pupils who achieved 5 or more awards at National 5 increase from the previous year. Barrhead, St Luke's and Woodfarm High Schools had their best ever performance for the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more awards at National 4.
- ✓ The Higher results for S5 pupils were once again strong across all measures. 84% of the original roll achieved 1 or more Highers. Similar to last year, 69% attained 3 or more Highers and 47% achieved 5 or more.
- ✓ Mearns Castle and Woodfarm had their best results for 5 or more Highers, with an 8% and 1% increase respectively. Eastwood High School continued to have impressive attainment across key S5 measures.
- ✓ Barrhead, Williamwood and Woodfarm had their best ever results for the proportion of S6 pupils achieving 1 or more Advanced Highers, increasing by over 11%, 4% and 3% respectively.
- ✓ Pupils at Isobel Mair School delivered fantastic SQA results, with senior pupils achieving a range of National 2 and vocational qualifications.
- ✓ The improvements at S4, S5 and S6 in the 2023 SQA results provide clear evidence that we have focussed on Equity and Excellence by raising the bar for all and exemplifying the education authority's vision of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences.

### Curriculum for Excellence Judgements

In 2022-23 almost all pupils in P1, P4 and P7 combined, achieved the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence level of attainment in the Broad General Education as measured by teacher professional judgement of progress in reading and talking and listening, with most pupils attaining the expected level in numeracy and writing. The proportions of East Renfrewshire pupils in P1, P4 and P7 combined achieving the expected level in these curricular areas, are significantly higher than the latest published national proportions (2021-22).

In 2022-23 almost all pupils in S3, achieved Curriculum for Excellence third level of attainment in the Broad General Education as measured by teacher professional judgement of progress in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy, with most pupils attaining fourth level in all areas. The proportions of East Renfrewshire pupils in S3 achieving at least third level and fourth level, are significantly higher than the latest published national proportions (2022-23).<sup>1</sup>

### Teacher professional judgements

Based on P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	ERC 3 Year Average 2020-21 to 2022-23	National Average 2022-2023
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Reading	90%	89%	91%	90%	80%
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Writing	87%	87%	89%	88%	75%
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Talking & Listening	94%	93%	94%	94%	87%
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Numeracy	90%	90%	91%	90%	80%

Based on S3 pupils	2018-2019	2021-2022*	2022-2023	ERC 3 Year Average 2020-21 to 2022-23	National Average 2022-2023
% Attaining or Exceeding Third Level – Reading	97%	97%	97%	97%	90%
% Attaining or Exceeding Third Level – Writing	96%	97%	96%	97%	89%
% Attaining or Exceeding Third Level – Talking & Listening	97%	97%	98%	97%	91%
% Attaining or Exceeding Third Level – Numeracy	96%	98%	98%	97%	90%

Based on S3 pupils	2018-2019	2021-2022*	2022-2023	ERC 3 Year Average 2020-21 to 2022-23	National Average 2022-2023
% Attaining Fourth Level – Reading	81%	83%	83%	82%	62%
% Attaining Fourth Level – Writing	80%	83%	84%	82%	60%
% Attaining Fourth Level – Talking & Listening	81%	82%	86%	83%	63%
% Attaining Fourth Level – Numeracy	78%	84%	82%	81%	63%

\*No data gathered in 2019-20 or 2020-21 due to Covid-19.

## Assessment and Moderation

Quality assurance and moderation remained a key focus in East Renfrewshire in 2022-23. The Education Department has had a significant focus on developing a shared understanding of standards through a range of moderation activity and professional learning opportunities over the past 10 years and is committed to continuing this work across all sectors.

Collaborative Learning Networks (CLN) were established in session 2022-2023 as a structure to focus on progression within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels and support collaborative planning of learning, teaching and assessment. Throughout the academic session, 760 practitioners across early years, primary and special sectors engaged in local authority moderation activity and professional learning to support their understanding of key local and national messages in relation to assessment and moderation. They moderated learner assessment evidence and 99% was agreed to have met the intended outcomes planned collaboratively by the CLN at the beginning of the session. When surveyed 99% of participants indicated that they felt equipped to engage in a collaborative learning network and 98% valued the opportunity to meet with colleagues beyond their own establishment.

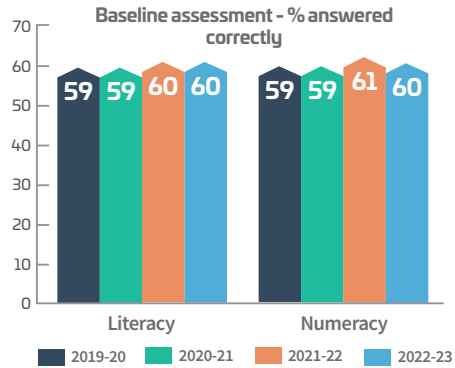


**There is a comprehensive programme of CLPL on offer linked to all aspects of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle for all practitioners. 133 newly qualified teachers engaged with a session focused on effective learning, teaching and assessment. Almost all (93%) indicated an increase in confidence to develop effective questioning techniques and (94%) increased confidence in providing effective feedback to learners.**



## Baseline Performance

A Baseline Assessment has been in place since 2005-06 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one. In contrast to the Developmental Milestones, overall performance in literacy and numeracy remains consistent with previous years, with a very slight decrease in numeracy as shown in the chart below.



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## Literacy Strategy

East Renfrewshire's Literacy Strategy actions have continued to be progressed, with a full Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) programme in place for teachers and pupil support assistants (PSA). This programme has been successful at improving confidence and competence in teaching and supporting literacy and English, leading to improved experiences for learners.

Four clusters have been involved in Chatterbox training with 41 PSAs developing their understanding of how to promote active listening and purposeful talk with learners.

Daily Literacy Learning (DLL) is a whole class approach to teaching reading and writing with a focus on oral language development. This year, 99 pupils across 3 schools benefitted from this literacy approach. At the beginning of the programme 79% of these pupils were reading below expected levels. 3 months later, after participating in the daily literacy activities, 63% of pupils were now reading at or above expected levels.

Reading Recovery teaching continues to support children in P2 struggling to make progress with literacy. This year, 58% of children who were taught through Reading Recovery were able to exit the programme having made progress equivalent to an average of two and a half years of reading age. The remaining 42% of children continued to receive support but still saw benefits, achieving an average of at least 9 months of progress in terms of reading age.

*"The Reading Recovery programme is absolutely invaluable! I truly believe that without the support of Reading Recovery my child's reading would not have come on so well. The difference in my child's confidence, ability and willingness to tackle reading tasks is like night and day! Thank you!"*

**Quote from the parent of a Reading Recovery pupil.**

Reading Recovery has been established in East Renfrewshire for a number of years. Our data now shows that children in P6 who received the support in P2 continue to make good progress achieving expected levels in literacy.

## Numeracy & Maths Strategy

The refreshed Numeracy and Mathematics Strategy 2023-26 was approved by Education Committee in June 2023. The strategy links clearly to the Education Department's vision 'Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences' and sets out three main areas - attainment and achievement, learners' experiences and stakeholders - detailing how we will ensure that all children and young people develop the numeracy and mathematics skills they need to be successful throughout life. The strategy will build on existing good practice in East Renfrewshire, use up-to-date research and evidence and ensure that numeracy and mathematics have a central and continuing focus in education.

A comprehensive professional learning programme is ongoing to support the aims of the strategy including: Number Talks and Numicon in Fractions, Decimals and Percentages. Staff across sectors were provided with opportunities to engage in activities with Education Scotland, Young Enterprise Scotland (Scotland's Financial Schools), West Partnership and our ERC Maths Champions Network/PT Subject Group. There are trained 'Maths Champions' in each establishment who are provided with support to lead in this area. Regular network meetings allow for the sharing of good practice and continued professional learning opportunities for the identified staff across the authority. All Maths Champions in early years and primary have used the professional learning opportunities and network meetings to develop their confidence and practices in teaching numeracy and maths. The creation of the ERC Numeracy & Mathematics Hub and Twitter account has been well received and engagement with these platforms is growing.



## NIF Priority 4: Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.

### Developing the Young Workforce

The Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) plan maintains a focus on curriculum, collaboration and equity. We develop and nurture relationships with employers to support learner experiences and broaden learner pathways. A priority of the DYW School Coordinators is to work with employers to allow our young people to demonstrate and apply these skills in different contexts. In November 2022, a successful Employer Engagement event was held to facilitate new networks and partnerships between DYW School Coordinators and local employers.

Our partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has ensured that our young people, staff and parents receive the most up to date, relevant labour-market information to support their learner pathways. Staff participated in professional learning to enhance their knowledge in relation to careers information and guidance. For the first time, Education Scotland and SDS supported the education department to offer professional learning on Developing the Young Workforce to all probationer teachers.

### Vocational Education

Vocational Education continues to contribute to the achievement and attainment of young people in the senior phase and supports them to develop skills for the workplace of further education in the future. In 2022-23, East Renfrewshire offered more than 60 courses, ranging from SCQF Levels 1 to 8 and provided by a wide range of partner Further Education providers. The number of young people participating in vocational courses increased from 380 in 2021-22 to 459 in 2022-23, demonstrating that, following a period affected by restrictions, young people felt more confident again to study out with their own school environment.

The progress of our young people is closely monitored to ensure successful outcomes for every young person undertaking a vocational course. This tracking is possible due to the support of college partners and training providers who work well with us to maintain pupil progress and intervene where appropriate, offering further support as required.

### School Leaver Destinations

The highest ever number of pupils leaving East Renfrewshire schools went on to university, college, work or training.

A total of 1,430 young people left East Renfrewshire schools in 2021-22, and in statistics published by the Scottish Government it has been confirmed that 1,408 (98.5%) had made a positive next step in their development. This is the highest proportion ever recorded in East Renfrewshire, with the previous best being 97.7% in 2017-18. East Renfrewshire has compared favourably against the Virtual Comparator, West Partnership and national averages for this measure over the past five years.



**98.5% of young people leaving school made a positive next step in their development**

From summary statistics for follow-up leaver destinations for the same 2021-22 cohort, 97.5% of East Renfrewshire school leavers were in a positive destination in April 2023, our highest ever proportion and comparing favourably to the national rate of 93.5%.

The proportion of young people with Additional Support Needs moving on to a positive destination reached the highest level recorded in the past five years in 2021-22 with 97.5% achieving an initial positive destination. Similarly, the proportion of East Renfrewshire leavers from a minority ethnic background reached record levels in 2021-22 with 99.6% achieving a positive destination. These are the latest figures on 2021-22 leavers which are reported on in February 2023.

In all East Renfrewshire schools, almost all school leavers achieved a positive destination. In Barrhead High, 100% of their school leavers moved into a positive destination, with over 99% of St Luke's High and St Ninian's High pupils also doing so.



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As agreed by Scottish Ministers, the Annual Participation Measure (APM) has been adopted in the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#) as the measure of young people's participation in education, employment, training or other positive post school destination. In 2023, 97.7% of East Renfrewshire 16-19 year olds were participating in a positive outcome, well above the national figure of 94.3% and the highest proportion nationally of young people actively participating in society in a positive way. A stretch aim of 91.5% was set for young people living in quintile 1, this was exceeded with 95.5% of young people recorded as participating. Similarly, the target of 98.4% for young people in quintile 5 was met with 98.5% recorded, reducing the poverty related attainment gap from 7.3% to 3%. The table below details the performance of pupils living in quintiles 1 and 5.

	Annual Participation Measure			
	All Pupils	Pupils living in Q1	Pupils living in Q5	Stretch Gap
2022 - 2023	0.7% increase	4.8% increase	0.4% increase	4.4% decrease

## NIF Priority 3: Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

Equity is at the heart of East Renfrewshire's education strategy and attainment results reflect the work of teachers to vigorously support all pupils. The department has rigorous and highly effective approaches to monitor and track the equity of provision for young people across our schools.

The analysis of outcomes for children and young people in the key equity groups is a central feature of our approach to self-evaluation and quality improvement. The Education Department and schools use data regularly to raise awareness, monitor progression, build leadership capability and capacity, plan improvement activities, and set targets.

### Raising the bar and closing the gap

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) can be used to identify children and young people who live in the most deprived areas in Scotland. We compare the performance of a range of key equity groups in East Renfrewshire against the overall national performance to measure and monitor the poverty-related attainment gap.

### Baseline

Baseline assessment data in 2022-23 highlighted a gap between the attainment of those living in SIMD 1-3 and those in SIMD 8-10. This poverty related attainment gap for numeracy has decreased to 7 points, down from 9 points in 2021-22, and in literacy, the gap has increased from 7 points in 2021-22 to 8 points in 2022-23.

## Developmental Milestones

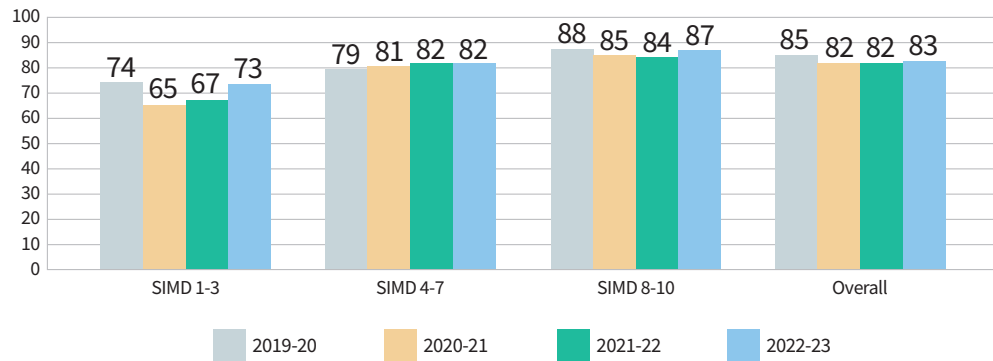
Since 2013-14 data has been gathered on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following developmental components are assessed: Social, Emotional, Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour. This session 83% of children achieved their developmental milestones, this is an increase of 1% on the previous two years as shown in the chart below.

From 2016-17 to 2019-20, there had been a steady increase in the percentage of children achieving their developmental milestones within the least affluent communities, defined as communities residing in areas

with a Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles values between 1 and 3. From 2021-22 to 2022-23 the performance of children living in the lowest deciles has increased by 6%, it has remained the same for deciles 4-7, and increased by 3% for those living in deciles 8-10.

Following the lockdown periods during 2020/2021 there had been a significant reversal in the previous reduction in the gap between the achievement of those from the most affluent, (SIMD 8-10), and least affluent, (SIMD 1-3) decile areas, with the gap reaching 20% in 2020-21, reducing to 17% in 2021/22 and reducing further to 14% in 2022/23. Although performance overall has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, the gap is now 14%, as it was in 2019/20, indicating recovery.

Developmental Milestones: History: by SIMD

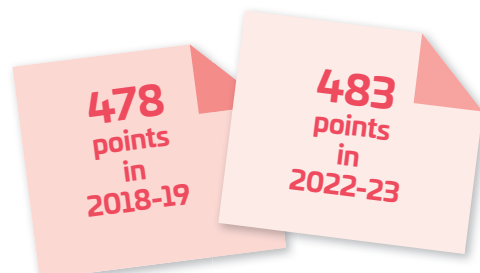


## SQA

A points system is used to report achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. Points are aggregated from the different qualifications included in the tariff. There is no ceiling to the number of points which can be accumulated.

In East Renfrewshire, the average total cumulative tariff points of the most deprived 30% of S4 pupils has increased from 478 points in 2018-19 to 483 points in 2022-23. The latest result represents a 1% increase over the past five years and is significantly above the national and Virtual Comparator values of 320 and 318 points respectively for the current year.

There was a significant increase in the average total tariff points of the lowest 20% in 2022-23 to 337 points; from 288 points in 2021-22 and 311 in 2018-19. These values still compare very well to the East Renfrewshire's latest Virtual Comparator result of 174 Insight points and the national result of 109 points.



Tariff points of the most deprived 30% of S4 pupils in East Renfrewshire

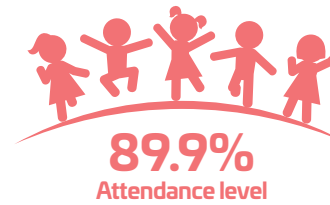
## 48 Free Meal Entitlement

The proportion of young people with free meal entitlement in S4 attaining 5 or more SCQF Level 5 awards remained at 55% in 2022-23; this compares favourably against the national and Virtual Comparator values; with 24% and 48% respectively.

## Looked After Children and Young People

The overall attendance for looked after pupils of 89.9% in East Renfrewshire is a slight increase on the previous year's figure and compares favourably to the national figure of 87.9%. More targeted interventions are now being provided by the Learn Well Service who are supporting attendance and engagement of children and includes a focus on Care Experienced Learners.

The percentage of looked after pupils achieving awards in English and Mathematics at National 3 or better increased by 9% to 67%; 50% of looked after pupils achieved 5 or more awards at National 3 and 5 or more awards at National 4. The percentage of S4 looked after pupils achieving 5 or more awards at National 5 remained at 8%, the same as 2021-22.



## Scottish Attainment Challenge Pupil Equity Funding

East Renfrewshire schools received a total of £1.48m Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in session 2022-23 to resource their work to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. As in previous years, schools adopted a wide range of interventions based on the needs of identified children in their local context, for example:

- Targeted support for literacy, numeracy and learning and teaching
- Initiatives to promote digital inclusion
- Support for pupil health and wellbeing
- Collaboration with third sector partners to support pupils and families facing specific barriers to school attendance and participation
- Initiatives to reduce the cost of the school day.

Throughout 2022-23 the department worked in partnership with schools to evaluate and improve the impact of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Pupil Equity Funding is allocated by Scottish Government directly to schools and is used to provide additional support for learners experiencing poverty and help close the poverty-related attainment gap. Through enhanced guidance, support from the Quality Improvement Team and training provided in partnership with Education Scotland, head teachers were supported to develop more rigorous approaches to targeting PEF towards those children most in need of support.

A Thematic Review of the Impact of PEF was carried out during March and April 2023. This considered a range of factors such as the quality of schools' evidence-based planning, collaboration with stakeholders and measurement of progress, as well as overall progress in improving learning outcomes for children and young people living with poverty.

The report highlighted a number of key strengths including the strong rationale for the use of PEF developed by all schools, the very high rates of positive and sustained destinations for socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, and the very high level of support to improve pupils' wellbeing provided by the Educational Psychology team. Some important areas for improvement were also identified and these have been used to plan next steps to be taken by schools and the education department to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners. Some key next steps will be continuing to improve the rigour and focus of PEF planning and evaluation to ensure progress, continued opportunities for professional learning and peer support, and increased collaboration across schools and with partners in order to increase the impact of the funding.

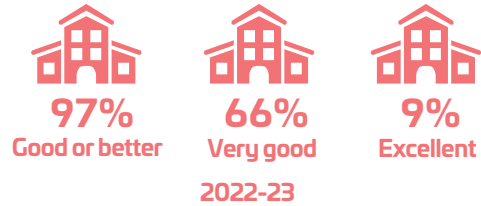
*“Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) very effectively to provide additional staffing and well-planned targeted support in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children are making successful progress towards closing their identified gaps.”*  
**Crookfur Primary School, Summarised Inspection Findings, Education Scotland, February 2023**



## Raising Attainment and Achievement

As part of the Education Department's annual improvement planning and reporting cycle, all ELC settings evaluate their performance against key quality indicators for How Good is Our ELC? with schools evaluating against indicators from How Good Is Our School?4. The Quality Improvement Team work together with Head Teachers to ensure that each school's self-evaluation is rigorous and takes account of a wide range of evidence gathered from diverse sources and involving all stakeholders.

In 2022-23, 97% of establishments evaluated their progress as 'good' or better for raising attainment and achievement. 66% were evaluated as 'very good' and 9% as 'excellent'.



## Early Learning and Childcare

We have taken a variety of steps to support quality, coherence and progression across early level learning and teaching.

This has included the successful delivery of high quality professional learning opportunities for school leaders and teachers on developing playful pedagogy in their schools in partnership with University of Strathclyde. This training was well attended and evaluated positively. Impact was demonstrated in follow up visits with the majority of schools inviting a member of the QIO team to their establishment to further support this child-centred approach to learning and teaching.

As a result of this continued focus, children in all primary one classrooms now experience a more responsive curriculum in more playful environments which supports their curiosity and independence well. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in achieving an appropriate balance of adult and child directed activities which ensure that children make very good progress across the Early Level as they move from nursery into primary one.

Financial resources were provided to all primary schools to enable them to extend their provision in the early years and this was seen to have a positive impact on the learning environments and the children's experiences. Children are also benefiting from increased access to outdoor learning which is being delivered as part of the overall approach to learning through play.

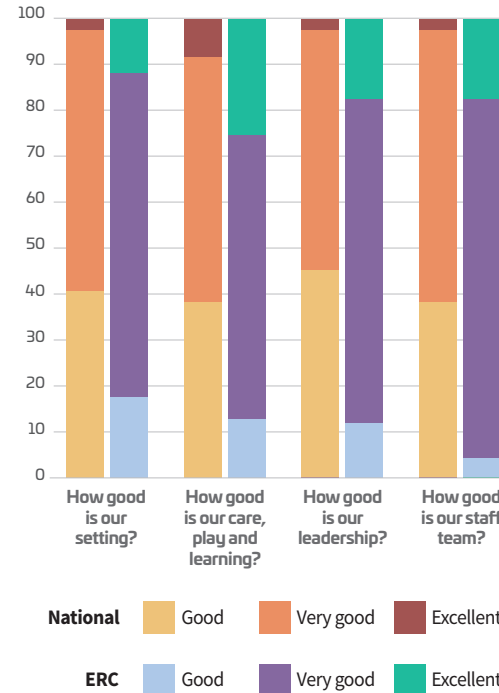
Teachers and senior leaders in primary schools engage with the data in the Early Years Tracking Tool which is used in ELC settings to track and monitor children's progress. This supports continuity and progression across Early Level and enables practitioners to more effectively build on what children already know and can do when they start primary one.

## 49 Early Years Strategy

This session the Care Inspectorate inspected five local authority settings: Overlee Family Centre, Carolside Nursery Class, Eaglesham Nursery Class, Glenwood Family Centre and Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class. All of these settings were awarded grades of very good or above.

The quality of Early Learning and Childcare in East Renfrewshire is very high across all key questions and significantly exceeds the national picture as of 30 June 2023.

Care Inspectorate Grades in East Renfrewshire Council ELC settings



### Overlee Family Centre report quotes:

"An extensive range of resources and experiences were on offer to support children's play and learning. The well thought out areas and resources were supporting children to have choice, and develop their independence and creativity. All parents who provided feedback strongly agreed, "My child has access to a good range of quality toys and play materials." We found the high-quality range of experiences and resources supported children to extend their vocabulary, and develop skills in numeracy and literacy."



### Carolside parent quote:

"My child loves nursery. The staff go above and beyond to ensure they are happy and enjoy their learning. The nursery always updates parents via Twitter and newsletters which keeps us informed. There are so many events which engage both pupils and parents in the nursery community. I feel like my child is safe, secure and loves learning here at Carolside Nursery."

### Eaglesham report quote:

“Children’s opportunities for play and learning were enhanced by strong community links and opportunities for play beyond the setting. This included visits to local farms, parks, open spaces, and the local care home. For example, on the day of inspection, a local farm was visiting with two lambs. We observed children enjoying meeting and learning about the lambs. This supported children’s learning and created strong links within the community.”



### Glenwood report quotes

How good is our care, play and learning? Excellent evaluation.

“We made an evaluation of excellent for this key question as we found innovative, effective practice and very high-quality performance across a range of the nursery’s activities from which other services could learn. We were confident that this level of performance was sustainable and that it will be maintained.”

“A range of strategies and regular opportunities through structured activities and programmes supported children to flourish and achieve. This significantly contributed to the inclusive ethos of the service.”

“We found children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promoted choice and independence. Well considered innovations such as a 'Digi Dome' to support digital literacy and creative approaches successfully engaged children's imagination and enrich their play and learning.”

### Cross Arthurlie report quote:

“Specific play areas including water, construction, house and art/design offered children resources to engage in a variety of play and learning experiences. Children were having lots of fun. We observed them in the construction area creating structures, they were deeply involved in imaginary play with their peers. Staff knew when to support or 'scaffold' children's play or stand back and observe.”

## What are we going to do now?

- Continue to implement the Numeracy & Mathematics Strategy 2023-2026.
- Update and implement the Literacy Strategy 2024-2027.
- Implement the Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2023-2026 and support and challenge school use of the Pupil Equity Fund.
- Continue to implement the Developing the Young Workforce Action Plan 2022-25.
- Continue to build capacity of the department and schools to gather information on pupils' progress in all curricular areas and in developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens).
- Invest in data and collaborative inquiry to support and challenge schools to develop their approaches to tackle the attainment gap.



# Everyone Achieving

A range of learners', staff members' and partners' achievements were celebrated during 2022-23. An ethos of high expectation and achievement is evident across all our educational establishments supported by a culture of self-improvement. Our children and young people are supported well, motivated to achieve and provided with various opportunities to ensure they succeed and maximise their potential.

## Leadership

Leadership development is a key area on the national policy agenda and the Education Department remains committed to providing a detailed and robust Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) programme for all our aspiring and experienced leaders. In a rapidly changing world, it is essential that leaders and managers are equipped with the skills to adapt to the changing needs of educational establishments and their communities. Senior Leaders provide strong leadership which enables our schools and centres to continuously improve.

The CLPL provision aims to increase leadership capacity across all sectors of the school estate and is supported through effective coaching and mentoring. Our educational establishments foster collaborative leadership opportunities for staff at all levels as leadership is essential in achieving high expectations and ambitions for all learners. There continues to be a range of professional learning opportunities for staff to develop in this area, for example through Masters Level learning as well as the *Into Headship* and *Excellence In Headship* programmes. During session 2022-23, the education department introduced a new *Operational Leadership* programme, which has been designed to complement our Aspiring Leaders programme and which has already been attended by a significant number of practitioners.

In 2022-23, three groups of practitioners across different levels and sectors have taken a professional inquiry approach to reviewing our East Renfrewshire Leadership Strategy. Their work will inform the refreshed strategy which will be launched during session 2023-24.



## CLPL and Professional Inquiry

Between August 2022 and June 2023, a wide range of courses were facilitated by the Quality Improvement Team and Education Psychology Service. Training programmes focussing on Assessment and Moderation, Literacy, Numeracy and Leadership have significantly increased the confidence of practitioners to improve learning, teaching and assessment. Evaluations of courses facilitated by the Quality Improvement Team demonstrated that almost all attending staff felt confident that their participation would lead to a positive impact on learners. Significant numbers of teachers participated in professional learning facilitated by the West Partnership, and increasingly our schools and ELC centres are sharing their professional learning across and beyond their clusters.

In partnership with the University of Strathclyde, a Research Hub which provided training and ongoing support for practitioners on appropriate and impactful professional inquiry was established in Barrhead High School. Every teacher engaged with a professional inquiry and, in some cases, collaborative inquiry with their peers which has further promoted the culture of inquiry across each establishment.

## OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**A Barrhead High School pupil has been recognised for her artistic talents. She was the winner of the Schools' Art Award 2022 (Secondary School Category) from the Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture - there were over 1000 entries from across Scotland. This award recognises work which displays creativity, originality and skills of technique and observation. Her entry - a selfie with a difference on the theme of self-reflection - was displayed in an online exhibition in May 2022. She also received full marks from the SQA for the model she designed and created for Design and Manufacture as part of her National 5 assignment. She is following her dream as she has been accepted into Model Making for TV and Film at City of Glasgow College.**

## OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**A pupil from Woodfarm High School was recognised in the Creativity and Personal Achievement category. She is a talented young chef and shot to national recognition by finishing fourth in the Young Chef of the Year competition, after battling it out against more than 13,000 other young people. Such is her dedication and skill that she has now been asked to return as a judge for the next Young Chef of the Year competition.**

### Quote from Fiona Johnston, HT Barrhead HS on the Research Hub:

*"Our partnership with Strathclyde University provided further opportunities for staff to engage in critical and creative thinking. Staff welcomed the opportunity to focus on measuring data, research approaches and working collaboratively to improve learning and teaching. Staff demonstrated confidence in sharing and discussing how their practice has evolved as a result of their enquiry via our showcase event. As a result, all staff are committed to an enquiring stance that is manageable and is linked with their professional learning to improve outcomes for young people.*

*Learners in the broad general education also had the opportunity to participate in a learning experience with Strathclyde University. The cohort worked together throughout the session to identify an issue to investigate and share their findings with all stakeholders. Feedback from learners and Strathclyde University confirmed that learners developed leadership and research skills and had the confidence to work with others to carry out an enquiry."*

All probationer teachers successfully completed a professional inquiry during the course of the session, with support from the Quality Improvement Team and school staff, and their findings were shared at a showcase event in May 2023.

Professional Update is a scheme of re-accreditation for teachers, which ensures the highest standards are maintained in Scottish schools. In September 2021, East Renfrewshire was re-accredited by GTCS to facilitate Professional Update. All teachers who completed their Professional Update in session 2022-23 evaluated the impact of their professional learning on themselves and pupils, and believed that their learning had improved their practice.

## Newly Qualified Teachers

51 Primary and 80 Secondary probationer teachers successfully completed their one year Teacher Induction Scheme placement in June 2023 and have achieved the GTCS Standard for Full Registration. They were well supported in their schools and through a comprehensive authority wide training programme facilitated by the education department.

In a survey carried out in June 2023, all probationers who responded agreed that professional learning experiences provided by the local authority had developed their professional values, knowledge and skills, and almost all agreed that they had developed as an enquiring professional through involvement in professional inquiry.

**One probationer teacher commented, through the questionnaire that: "Everyone I have come in contact with has been hugely supportive and helped me to develop."**



## OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**An S1 pupil in St Ninian's won the First Prize of Individual Intermediate Category in the Final of the 2023 'Chinese Bridge' Mandarin Speaking Competition for UK Schools. She competed with other Secondary school students, often much older than her. A real inspiration for other learners.**

## Improving Our Classrooms

Improving Our Classrooms (IOC) is part of the West Partnership's 'Improving Our...' professional learning programmes. Members of the Quality Improvement Team work with the West Partnership team to deliver this Masters Level professional learning programme for practitioners in the primary and secondary sectors. The other programmes are Improving Our Schools (IOS) and Improving our Departments (IOD). These programmes place classroom practitioners at the heart of school improvement and focus on self-evaluation at classroom level leading to improved attainment and approaches to learning and teaching.

In 2022-23, 13 teachers participated in the IOC programme and submitted a Case Study of Improvement. They were provided with a mentor, who has previously engaged with the programme, to support them throughout the session. Participating teachers were asked to evaluate the impact of their participation in IOC on both the learners they work with and their own practice. 92% said they saw an increase in pupil attainment and 100% felt that the changes they made to their practice had improved pupil confidence. 100% of participants said that they were using data more to improve learner outcomes and 92% felt that their skills as a practitioner had improved.

*"I have really enjoyed the programme, the level of input from everyone who delivered the course was exceptional and I felt so motivated after each session to go back to my class and try new things!"*  
**IOC participant.**

In 2022-23 we had one primary school engaging with Improving Our Schools. This programme supported all teachers in the school through their engagement in the high quality professional learning programme which had a consistent focus on data informed targeted interventions to improve attainment and achievement in literacy and English for all children across the school.

### Quote from Gerard Curley, Head Teacher of Neilston Primary School:

*"We have been involved in Improving Our Schools for about a year and a half and it has fundamentally changed the way we consider and use our classroom-level data, how this connects with practitioner enquiry and how we measure outcomes for learners through our professional dialogues. This is improving the accuracy and reliability of our teacher judgements."*

### Quote from P6 Class Teacher, Neilston Primary School:

*"Progressing through the IOS programme has felt incredibly empowering. It has given me a much deeper understanding of the different types of data that are relevant to a young person's learning journey and the external factors that may be impacting on their progress. Most importantly I now feel better equipped to maintain the best possible pace and gradient of learning for each individual learner and understand where our learners sit in comparison to other learners both locally and across Scotland."*



## OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**Two pupils at St Ninian's High School were celebrated for their contribution to the school community through their work in founding and developing the Bees Knees Café. The café offers staff and visitors a wide range of barista prepared hot drinks. They run a bi-weekly coffee shop during lunch and interval which has customer relationships at its heart with a loyalty scheme to recognise those who consistently support the café. The Bees Knees Café is self-funded with profits reinvested within the enterprise and donated to support local charities. Staff in St Ninian's value the positive impact of the café on their wellbeing, as it provides a hub for everyone to get together informally.**

## 52 Adult Learning Services

During 2022-2023, Adult Learning Services successfully re-established face to face learning across the authority. 140 residents engaged with a range of learner-centred programmes taking place throughout the authority including an increase in the number of adult learners attending one or more of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. 105 adults, an increase from 80 last session, accessed ESOL courses at all levels from complete beginners to upper intermediate.

*"My grammar has improved and I can reply to emails better than before," "I can talk to the doctor with more confidence," "My speaking and listening skills are much better."* **Adult Learner**

Adult Learning Services continue to work in partnership with Further Education partners for all ESOL provision.

- 21 adults successfully completed ESOL for Work programmes to achieve work-related learning goals
- 12 adults achieved a SQA ESOL qualification at National 4 Level
- 42 parents successfully completed 'ESOL for Parents' learning opportunities aimed at improving skills, knowledge and confidence in relation to family learning goals

*"I understand better what some parents and teachers say at school since joining the ESOL course," "I can talk to my child's teachers face to face with more confidence."* **ESOL Participant**

Funding for three specific ESOL projects this year allowed adults arriving in East Renfrewshire from Hong Kong, Ukraine and Afghanistan to be supported by the service. These projects are aimed at improving English language skills as well as providing a wide range of support and integration opportunities. There was also a successful bid for Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery funding (LACER). As a result of this funding 15 parents were supported to achieve self-directed learning goals relating to their children's learning and their own aspirations. 100% of participants reported that their confidence and wellbeing had improved as a result of being part of the LACER project.

In partnership with West College Scotland, an increased number of adult learners gained SQA qualifications. Twenty eight people successfully completed SQA courses at SCQF Level 4, Getting Started in IT and Early Learning & Childcare. Twenty nine adult learners were supported through Learning for Work programmes.

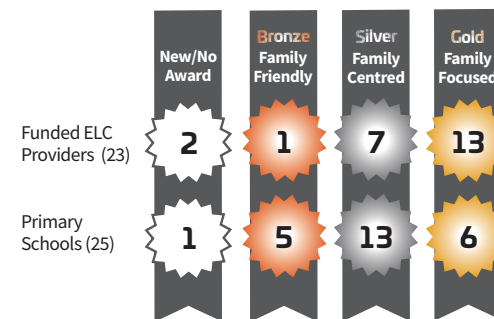
## Parental Engagement and Involvement Strategy

As restrictions eased and more parents re-entered our buildings, all of our educational establishments were keen to fully re-engage with parents throughout session 2022-23.

Family Centred Approaches is a self-evaluation framework used by our education establishments to assess how well they involve and engage with families across their communities. Seven more ELC settings achieved Gold Family Focused status this year: Braidbar Nursery Class, Cartmill Family Centre, Carolside Nursery Class, Crookfur Nursery Class, Giffnock Nursery Class, Netherlee Nursery Class and McCready Family Centre.

In addition, four more primary schools achieved Gold status: Braidbar Primary, Crookfur Primary, Giffnock Primary and Netherlee Primary. Our first secondary school, St. Ninian's High School, has a plan in place to achieve Bronze and Silver accreditation 2023-24.

### Family Centred approaches data:





## Convener's Awards for Outstanding Achievement

The annual Convener's Awards were celebrated in Clarkston Halls in March 2023. 38 young people and groups from across the authority were recognised for outstanding achievements in various fields such as sports, creativity, community service and advocacy.

Councillor Andrew Anderson, Convener of Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure, presented all the winners with a certificate and commemorative award.

He said: "The Convener's Awards are certainly a highlight in the calendar and I was delighted to attend this event in person this year, following the disruption of recent years due to the pandemic. It was extremely humbling to hear all of the outstanding achievements from this group of young people who have been so committed to working hard and excelling this year. All of the winners should be incredibly proud of themselves, they are a credit to not only themselves but their families and their school."

### OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**A pupil from Mearns Castle High School has been celebrated for his volunteering to support different school initiatives and events. He is a very active member of the school community. He volunteers with Newton Mearns Community Help Services providing support for elderly residents. He is keen to build upon the group of 5 he co-ordinates throughout the week to help more vulnerable adults across the community.**

## Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy

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Practitioners have accessed a range of CLPL opportunities that allow them to make the most effective use of digital technology to enrich learning and teaching and develop the digital skills of their learners. Every education establishment has a trained Digital Leader with the ability to share practice to facilitate professional learning across in the appropriate and effective use of digital technology.

Establishments have been supported to be outward looking and innovative in their approaches to digital learning and teaching. Devices from our Digihub are loaned to schools and platforms such as the Digihub Digest and ICT Coordinators' meetings are used to disseminate information about new and emerging technologies. The introduction of these is supported through our ongoing CLPL programme.

*"It was excellent and my class absolutely loved it! Their faces lit up with excitement the first time they ran the project and saw it working. The competitive element of the reaction time challenge kept them engaged long after they had completed the coding project. Thank you!"*  
**Feedback about a Code Along session from primary practitioner**

## STEM Strategy

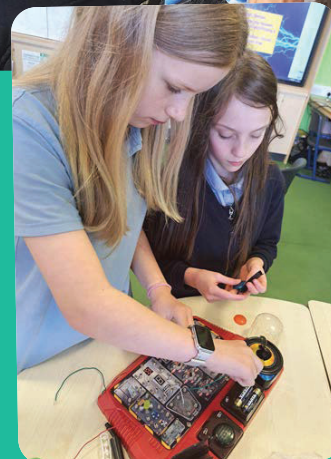
The Raising Aspirations in Science Education (RAISE) programme empowers primary school practitioners with the confidence, skills, and networks to develop and deliver engaging and motivating STEM learning experiences. The work of the RAISE programme is aligned to the STEM Education and Training Strategy and the Developing the Young Workforce Programme. It aims to raise attainment and achievement in primary Science and STEM, and tackle inequity and inequality in learners' experiences and outcomes. There was a comprehensive professional learning programme put in place in response to cluster surveys carried out to determine CLPL requirements. These sessions were highly evaluated with practitioners highlighting increased motivation, enthusiasm and engagement with this area of the curriculum and opportunities provided to connect with partners and raised awareness of STEM careers.

*"The learning opportunities have helped me understand the variety of way science can be delivered in the classroom."* **Practitioner**

*"Introduced learners to a new dimension in science. Working with business partners has offered real life experiences of science and technology and strengthened community links."* **Practitioner**

## What are we going to do now?

- Implement the revised Leadership Strategy.
- Continue to implement the Parental Engagement and Involvement Strategy 2021-2024.
- Implement the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024-2027.
- Offer a range of learning opportunities for adult learners to gain skills for learning, life and work.
- Continue to work in partnership with ELC settings, schools and ERC Culture and Leisure Trust to ensure all children and young people have high quality opportunities for achievement that are recognised and celebrated.
- Build system capacity to support continuous improvement through robust self evaluation processes and high quality career long professional learning.



# Excellent Experiences

It is recognised nationally, that the high standard of education in East Renfrewshire, which has been sustained over many years, leads to positive outcomes for learners. We are ambitious for each and every one of our children and whilst attainment is consistently strong, we work continually to raise the bar for all. Our staff are our most valuable resource. We place great importance on investing in them to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver creative and engaging experiences for all.

## NIF Priority 1: Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education

East Renfrewshire Council and its partners have taken various steps to progress children's rights across all of its services within the context of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) and The Promise.

The Children's Services Plan 2023-26 demonstrates a commitment to promoting and protecting children and young people's rights and is underpinned by the national GIRFEC wellbeing framework which aligns with all that we do in East Renfrewshire.



## UNCRC Rights Respecting Schools

There has been a range of training opportunities and professional learning in relation to children's rights. Four members of staff across Education and Community Learning and Development have been trained as UNCRC 'Train the Trainers'. They are currently using this training to develop materials that can be used across the council and partners. Training is arranged for Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) leads via our partnership with the UNCRC RRS team, Education Scotland and West Partnership. This supports settings and schools to lead in-house training in schools in line with the RRS guidance and assessment process.

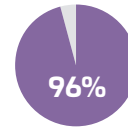
In questionnaires, most pupils (89%) agree that their school helps them to understand their rights. In recent school accreditation visits UNICEF highlighted the range of mechanisms that allow pupils to take on leadership roles and be involved in decision making and commented on articulate pupils who are able to discuss a wide range of rights and explain their importance in their lives. These visits led to Rights Respecting Gold Awards for Busby Primary School, Cross Arthurlie Primary School and Mearns Primary School.

Young Leaders of Learning is a programme designed to help children and young people to be more actively involved in helping to improve their schools. Two Education Officers have been trained as trainers in delivering this programme and have provided professional learning to a number of schools. Eleven schools are currently involved in this programme and pupils have been trained as young leaders of learning and are participating in visits to other schools.

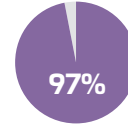
A young person's Rights group, established in partnership with East Renfrewshire's CLD team, are committed to ensuring that young people's rights are promoted and upheld in their communities. The group successfully received Participatory Budgeting funding which they used to visit and learn from the Scottish Parliament. They worked with East Renfrewshire's UNCRC Implementation Group to plan and deliver East Renfrewshire's first Youth Assembly which took place in June 2023, giving young people a platform to consult with senior decision makers on issues relating to their rights. It was one step in the co-production and design of East Renfrewshire's Young People's "Rights Committee". The event was youth-led, bringing young people from schools, community groups and voluntary organisations together with Senior Council Officers and Elected Members in a workshop to explore a range of issues. The event took place on the 15th June and has led to an agreement to establish a Children's rights committee.

## 54 Questionnaire Data

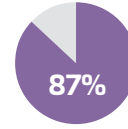
Statistics gathered from questionnaires in 2022-23 showed that:



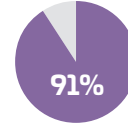
of teachers stated that they have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school.



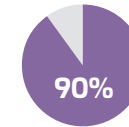
said that their professional learning enables them to reflect on and improve their practice.



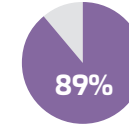
agreed that collaborative working across the school is effective in taking forward improvement.



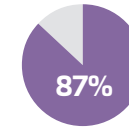
of parents and carers said they were satisfied with their child's school/setting.



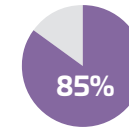
of children and young people said that their school helps them to understand and respect other people.



agreed that they have opportunities to take part in school committees or groups.



feel that the feedback they receive of their work helps them to improve their learning



of parents and carers feel that staff know their child as an individual and 79% feel that staff support their child's emotional and mental wellbeing.

## Collaborative Improvement Visits

Following the pilot of the Collaborative Improvement Visits (CIVs) in Early Years, Primary and Special sectors last session, 2 more visits took place in 2022-23 in St Joseph's Primary and Eaglesham Primary and Nursery Class. The focus of these visits were decided upon collaboratively by the establishment and the visiting team with a consistent focus on learning and teaching and raising attainment for all.

CIVs also took place with secondary practitioners in Science and Health and Wellbeing departments and faculties. These visits provide colleagues with opportunities to work collaboratively to identify what is working well and support continuous improvement.

Building on the collaborative approach for improvement across sectors, it was agreed by representatives from the seven cluster schools that a model for clusters of schools would be developed to replace the Effective Transitions review process. The model is aimed at providing a framework that supports improvement in identified areas of cluster activity and promotes partnership working ensuring that we achieve sustainable improvements for all children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2022-23, the Woodfarm Cluster piloted this model to evaluate the effectiveness of their cluster arrangements to secure curricular continuity and progression and provide high quality experiences for children and young people to progress in their learning.



### Quote from Rob Lawson, Head Teacher and Woodfarm Cluster Chair:

"Self-evaluation is an integral aspect of improvement. When considering authority-based review formats for self-evaluation, a key challenge lies in finding methods which feel 'done with' rather than 'done to', so that the evaluations can support establishments to constructively progress. The WFHS Collaborative Improvement Visit enabled us to work alongside authority colleagues in order to target key questions in our improvement cycle and to benefit from extended professional dialogue across the staff teams. Robust, respectful and collaboratively formed evaluations have helped us to synthesise our understanding of both key strengths and next steps."

## Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Reference Group

The Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Reference group was established to develop the department's vision for Curriculum for Excellence: 2025 and support improvements in learning, teaching and assessment. It is made up of members of the Quality Improvement Team, Head Teachers, Depute Head Teachers and Principal Teachers from across all seven clusters. The group have been developing support resources focused on the curriculum and learning, teaching and assessment. Schools and ELC settings are empowered to use these resources to develop their curriculum to reflect their own unique context and provide the highest quality experiences for all. The resources feature key information about developing 21st century skills through play and enquiry based learning and provide CLPL on the most up to date pedagogical research and features of highly effective practice that can be used to support practitioners across all educational establishments.



**In 2022-23, 100% of schools self-evaluated their provision as 'good' or better for learning, teaching and assessment. 63% were evaluated as 'very good', an increase of 13% in 2021-22.**

## Primary Language Learning

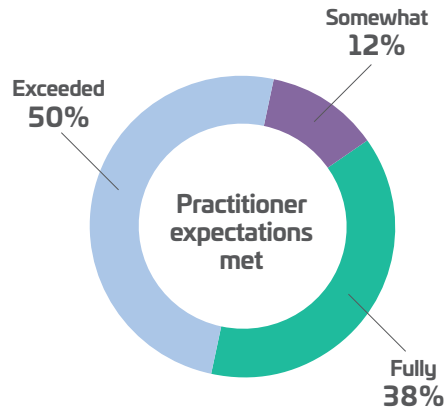
Since 2019-20 a network of primary school staff with leadership responsibility for Modern Languages have been working collaboratively to further develop primary language learning experiences. During 2022-23 the Languages Leaders network led the introduction of refreshed P6-7 French experiences with increased focus on relevant, cross-curricular themes such as health and wellbeing, literacy across languages and global citizenship. Practitioners worked together to enact and refine the planned curriculum at this level, which is now bespoke to each cluster in order to better reflect the needs and interests of learners in their local context. Progress was shared across the authority via the Languages Leaders Network showcase in May 2023. This was also attended by representatives from cluster secondary Modern Languages departments to support continued progression in learning from P7 to the secondary Broad General Education.

The work of the Languages Leaders Network was supported by ongoing professional learning and support for primary practitioners more widely, to help ensure all pupils experience high quality language learning experiences as part of their day to day learning. 220 primary practitioners from all clusters of schools engaged in training and support provided by Education Development Officer for Modern Languages, representing a 22% increase on the previous session.



Evaluations from these sessions indicated a very high level of satisfaction with 88% of practitioners reporting their expectations were fully met or exceeded.

86% of participants reported that their professional learning had a significant impact on their curriculum knowledge, while 92% reported a significant impact on the pedagogical approaches they used to deliver language learning experiences.



*'I am much more confident delivering French inputs, which has had a positive impact on the class.'* Participant

*'Children have a much more positive attitude towards language learning. They regularly greet staff, answer the register, order their lunch and ask to go to the bathroom in French.'* Participant

55



## French and Spanish Exchange Trips

From January to June 2023, 140 S3 pupils from Barrhead, Eastwood and Williamwood High Schools took part in an extended exchange project with three schools in France and two schools in Spain. Young people initially got to know pupils at their partner schools remotely by exchanging emails, postcards, presentations and videos in English, French and Spanish about their daily lives and their interests. They then visited their partner schools during a series of trips to France and Spain during May and June, spending time in the schools as well as taking part in cultural activities with their French and Spanish peers. A wide range of activities such as shared musical performances, sports activities, cookery workshops, tours and visits supported young people to build relationships and develop strong intercultural understanding.

Evaluations following the exchange trips showed that pupils appreciated having opportunities to practise their foreign language skills in real life situations and further develop their knowledge and understanding. In a focus group, pupils spoke about gaining the confidence to 'go for it' in the foreign language and noted the main benefits of the exchange project as *'improved communication, improved confidence, independence and an opportunity to challenge stereotypes'*. Both pupils and teachers have reported a positive impact on participants' engagement in language learning within school following the exchange trips.

*'I enjoyed the opportunity to practise shorter and longer conversations on vocabulary that we wouldn't necessarily use in class.'*  
S3 pupil participant, Eastwood High School

## Mandarin for Life and Work

97 S1-S6 learners from four high schools attended a *Mandarin for Life and Work* event in February 2023, organised by the ERC Chinese Learning and Teaching Group in partnership with Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS). The event aimed to increase engagement, uptake and attainment in Mandarin language learning and to reinforce the relevance and importance of Chinese language and cultural competency in the world of work.

Learners took part in a range of workshops centred on the benefits of language learning for life and work and specifically the opportunities that Mandarin skills can create. They also took part in collaborative activities to boost their own Mandarin language skills. Feedback from the event showed that learners felt more informed about the direct and indirect benefits of pursuing Mandarin and other languages in the future and that they would welcome further opportunities to use their Mandarin language skills with others. A number of pupils indicated that they had decided to continue studying Mandarin following the event.



## Gaelic Medium Primary Education

In October 2022 the council received a request for an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in the council area. Following a full assessment in line with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 and a public consultation, the decision was taken to establish GMPE at Thornliebank Primary School from August 2023. The new provision, called Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Thornliebank, will initially welcome children in Primary 1 from August 2023 and will expand to Primary 2 in 2024-25. Children in Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Thornliebank will learn entirely in Gaelic during a total immersion phase from P1-P3, before also engaging with English language and literacy learning from P4 onwards. A principal teacher and class teacher were successfully recruited during spring 2023 and building works took place to ensure appropriate facilities and learning environments for the P1 children from August 2023.



### Instrumental Music Service

In 2022-23, for the first time since the interruptions due to the pandemic, East Renfrewshire Schools' Ensembles and Choir managed to take part in competitions and festivals.

In March 2023, the East Renfrewshire Schools' Senior String Orchestra, Junior String Orchestra and the Junior Choir all took first place in their classes at the Glasgow Music Festival in the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow.

The East Renfrewshire Schools' Senior Strings Orchestra were awarded the 'Dorothy Gunnee Trophy' for best orchestral playing during the festival.

In addition, the East Renfrewshire Schools' Senior Concert Band took part in the Scottish Concert Band Festival and were awarded a Gold Award in the regional Festival in Livingston in December 2022 and awarded a Gold Plus Award in the National Finals in Perth Concert Hall in March 2023.

All of these ensembles and choir are made up of pupils from all schools throughout East Renfrewshire.

*"It was really an experience to watch the pupils play so well at their festival performance. It is a big reflection on the commitment given by the teachers working with them weekly throughout the year"*  
Parent

*"Thank you so much for organising the choir being a part of the festival. The opportunity was a great learning and confidence building experience for my child, both musically and personally, and we are very grateful for the huge effort that you all have put in to make it happen."*  
Parent



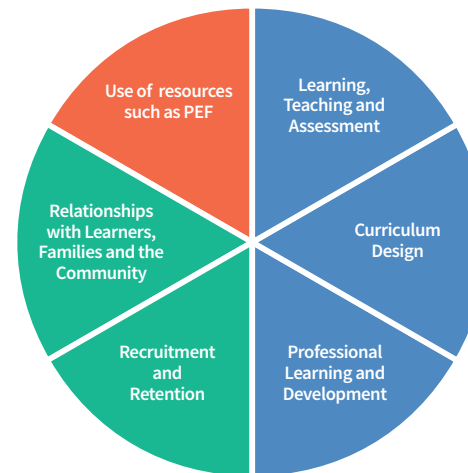
### Social Justice Framework and Strategy 2023-26

The education department supports all schools and centres to continually improve the equality, diversity and inclusiveness of education in order to meet the needs of all learners, with a particular focus on learners in key equity groups who are most at risk of poorer outcomes due to inequality and discrimination. As part of this support, a new Social Justice Framework and three-year Social Justice Strategy were launched in March 2023, following extensive consultation with learners, parents, practitioners and senior leaders from May to October 2022. The framework and strategy bring together practical guidance and signpost resources to help schools promote social justice through six key areas of practice: curriculum design; learning, teaching and assessment; relationships; professional learning and development; recruitment and retention; and use of resources.

The framework sets high expectations for all practitioners to enact the education profession's central value of social justice through their work, linking key features of effective, inclusive practice to the refreshed GTCS Professional Standards (2021). Extensive opportunities for professional learning and development will be offered throughout 2023-26 to support progress towards the aims set out within the strategy. Progress will be evaluated by the education department annually and monitored on an ongoing basis through quality improvement visits, data analysis and professional dialogue.



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I have increased my knowledge about different equality groups and their needs.

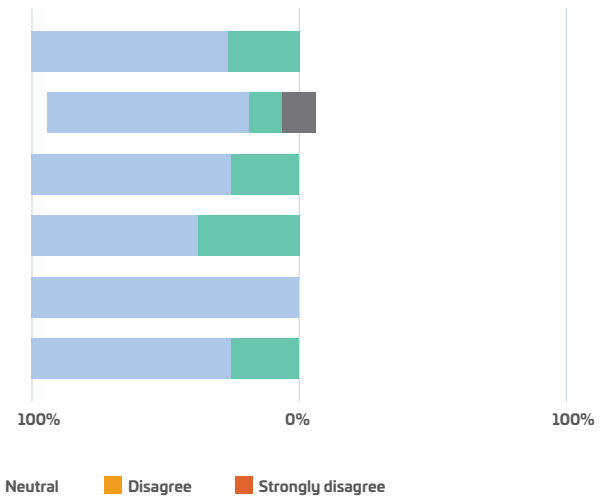
I have gained practical approaches I can use in my school.

I have shared / I intend to share my learning with colleagues in my school.

I know where I can access further guidance and support to help me lead on equality and social justice.

I have had meaningful opportunities to network and share learning with colleagues doing similar work.

I feel well supported to lead on equality and social justice.



*One day EVERYBODY should have ALL of their rights met no matter what.'*  
P7 pupil, Hillview Primary School

*'Social justice is when everyone gets what they need as an individual.'*  
P7 pupil, Our Lady of the Missions PS

### Equalities Network

The Equalities Coordinators Network are members of school leadership teams with responsibility for leading on equality and social justice, who met termly throughout 2022-23 to undertake professional learning on current equality issues and share effective practice to promote equality and social justice. A range of partners from Education Scotland, other council services and third sector organisations, together with the Quality Improvement Team, supported schools to improve equality and social justice through sessions focused on:

- Supporting families through the cost of living crisis
- Decolonising the curriculum
- Culturally and socially responsive practice.

Evaluations showed that participation in the network had supported these key members of staff to increase their knowledge and skills, so that they felt confident to lead on equality and social justice effectively in their schools and centres.



## Cost of Living Crisis

Throughout the session members of the Quality Improvement Team worked with schools and centres, third sector organisations and other council services to improve the support available to families experiencing poverty. A half-day professional learning focus on the cost of living crisis for Equalities Coordinators in September 2022 supported and challenged schools and centres to deepen their understanding of the challenges faced by families on low incomes and identify further ways to offer support via schools and centres.

Schools also worked to reduce the impact of poverty on children and young people by leading initiatives to reduce the Cost of the School Day (CoSD). The CoSD approach uses consultation with children, young people and families to identify the most significant financial stressors associated with school attendance and provides a framework for developing an action plan to reduce costs. 17 schools have engaged with support offered by the education department through the CoSD school leads online group since 2021, and CoSD approaches are becoming well embedded in the work of a majority of schools. CoSD activities are improving children's health and their basic welfare through initiatives such as uniform recycling schemes and community food larders, as well as by replacing expensive school events and celebrations with more budget-friendly alternatives.

The Money Advice and Rights Team worked in partnership with the education department to develop a pilot project offering financial advice within two primary schools. This approach builds on parents' positive relationships with the school and enables them to access support and advice in a discreet, familiar environment. By increasing families' income, the service helps to reduce the negative impact of poverty on children's health and wellbeing. Following very positive feedback on the impact of the pilot, the initiative will be expanded.



## Anti-racism

The education department continued to support and challenge schools and centres to understand more deeply, identify more quickly, and respond more effectively to racism. Building on work with senior leaders to increase racial literacy during spring 2022, a series of wider professional learning opportunities for practitioners tackling key aspects of anti-racist practice were attended by over 200 staff from all sectors between October 2022 and March 2023. Evaluations of these sessions were very positive and suggested that schools and centres would welcome more support to improve in this challenging area.

Equalities Coordinators were supported to consider the relationship between racism and the curriculum through a specific focus on decolonising the curriculum in January 2023. Through collaborative self-evaluation, coordinators have prioritised further work on decolonising the curriculum and developing culturally and socially responsive practice for session 2023-24.

This will be supported by the Quality Improvement Team through the department's Social Justice Strategy.

*'I have, embarrassingly, not previously considered in depth that a child or colleagues may feel their culture was not valued in the classroom. You raised so many interesting points in the session that I just had not thought of before and plan to take fully on board.'* Participant, Anti-racist Ethos in Learning and Teaching

*'I feel more confident in addressing these issues with my class and ensuring all children are included and feel respected and valued.'* Participant, Culturally Responsive Teaching

## 57 Supporting Bilingual Learners and Families

Extensive professional learning opportunities were available throughout 2022-23 to support establishments to improve the experiences of bilingual children, young people and their families. 165 practitioners engaged with a wide range of sessions focusing on specific aspects of effective bilingual support. A further 136 participants attended bespoke in-school sessions for staff teams. Themes addressed included:

- Supporting newly arrived learners
- Building literacy with pupils who speak English as an Additional Language
- Using digital technologies to support bilingual learners
- Engaging and involving bilingual parents/carers.

All sessions were highly evaluated by participants, with feedback from all sectors suggesting that this support is helping practitioners to improve the experiences of bilingual children and young people, improve the inclusivity of their school's culture and ethos and increase parental involvement.

*'Lots of super ideas and suggestions that got me thinking of the ways I currently introduce texts and how I can help my pupils access the curriculum with more understanding.'*

**Participant, Building Literacy in EAL**

*'Your sessions have helped me really improve the experiences of an EAL learner in my class.'*

**Participant, Supporting EAL Learners in Building Vocabulary**



## Anti-bullying

Following extensive training and support for the improved recording of incidences of bullying behaviour, our educational establishments continue to report and address incidences of bullying behaviour.

The education department is working in partnership with the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership to raise awareness of and reduce incidences of gender based violence. We have provided schools with guidance on dealing with Gender Based Violence In Schools. Eastwood High School was visited as part of an Education Scotland national thematic review on Anti-Bullying in October 2022. It was found that the recording of bullying incidents was as per the Scottish Government guidance and expectations and in addition, the school had put in place additional measures to track patterns and trends providing an understanding of the school's unique context. Of particular note was the school's actions taken to prevent bullying behaviours with parents and pupils commenting that staff across the school are approachable, highly visible and available. Pupil leadership was indicated as a strength and the evidence gathered during the visit is to be put forward as an Education Scotland case study for noteworthy and effective practice.

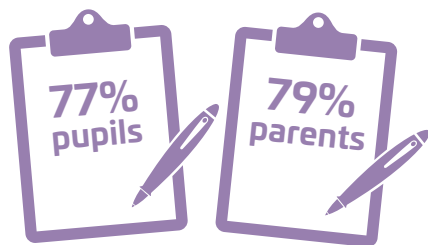
## Mentors in Violence Prevention

All secondary schools have staff and senior pupils trained in Mentors in Violence Prevention which is provided by Education Scotland, along with partners from the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership, CLD, Women's Aid and Police Scotland. School staff and partners train nominated senior pupils as mentors to deliver workshops to pupils in S1-S3 through the PSHE programme. Evaluations of the professional learning for staff have been very positive, demonstrating an increased awareness of the issues relating to this subject. Mentors from Woodfarm High School have presented to groups of council staff and partners to talk about their experience and the impact of their work.

Professional learning for staff in educational establishments is provided at Child Protection Coordinator meetings and through the multi-agency Public Protection Calendar.

## NIF Priority 2: Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.

All East Renfrewshire educational establishments adopt a Health Promoting approach to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and families.



**In questionnaires, most pupils (77%) agreed that the staff supported them with their wellbeing and most parents (79%) agreed that the staff support their child's emotional and mental wellbeing.**

Following consultation with learners in all secondary schools, a working group produced a Personal and Social Education (PSE) Skills Planner which has been used to plan progression within experiences and outcomes relating to health and wellbeing. The framework promotes and supports effective learning and teaching methodologies which stimulates the interests of learners. Across schools there is a particular focus on mental and emotional wellbeing with staff participating in professional learning to build the capacity of all staff to support children and young people's health and wellbeing.



## Healthier Minds Service

The Educational Psychology Service has continued to support children's mental and emotional wellbeing through the Healthier Minds Service. 44 multi-agency screening hubs took place where 376 children and young people were discussed, including 66 re-referrals. 143 children, young people and families were supported by the Healthier Minds team and 136 were referred to our commissioned youth counselling service.



94% of the children and young people who received support from the Healthier Minds team reported improved outcomes. The service worked closely with schools and Community Learning and Development (CLD) in order to support young people to access relevant provision and support, including community-based supports.

*"I'm able to build relationships with family and friends better. This made me happier, improved my overall wellbeing." Pupil*

*"We were very happy with our experience with Healthier Minds, as a family it brought us together when we were struggling." Parent*

Through the Healthier Minds Network there have been 21 professional learning sessions provided for over 421 staff from Education, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and third sector organisations. In 2022, training was developed to provide staff with the knowledge, understanding and strategies to support children and young people who are self-harming. This training was developed alongside a young person and parent with lived experience. Participants reported that their confidence in supporting self-harm had improved post training.

*"A really worthwhile course and has given me some strategies to use almost instantly with a child on my return to school." Participant*

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The Learn Well Service has been established to support young people with their wellbeing and education while they are not attending school for reasons relating to Emotionally Based School Absence (EBSA) – so far the service has supported 32 young people. The service works in close partnership with the young person, their family, the school and Community Learning and Development (CLD) to ensure that their educational needs are met and that a range of opportunities remain open to them. The core aims of the service are improving outcomes for young people and helping them to recognise their own potential.

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has developed guidance for Learn Well practitioners and wider education staff to more effectively support children and young people who experience EBSA. Online training seminars were organised in collaboration with the Healthier Minds Service, and 14 participants from within education attended, reporting positive impact on their practice and understanding of the area as a result.

The EPS developed evaluation tools for the Learn Well Service to explore how the young people supported by the service feel about their health, wellbeing and education. This tool will support the tracking of progress over time and impact of opportunities provided.

## Additional Support for Learning

Following the review of Additional Support for Learning (ASL) during session 2021-22, a governance group was established in August 2022 to take forward the recommendations of the ASL report. The recommendations are based on extensive consultation with children, young people, parents/carers and partners and will enable us to develop an improved model of ASL provision.

Colleagues from across different sectors and provisions are working together through four separate workstreams to take forward the recommendations. The workstreams are:

- **Vision**
- **Culture and Climate**
- **Specialist Provision**
- **Professional Learning.**

This work is in ongoing with a target completion date of June 2025. Workstream groups are working closely with schools and involving children and young people in the development of proposed improvements to ensure their needs and views are well reflected.

A Communication Support Centre has been established in Carolside Primary School and they welcomed their first learners in August 2023. There has also been an enhanced Nurture provision created within Carlibar Primary School; 'the Den' started supporting learners across various establishments in September 2023.

## The Promise

Most primary and all secondary schools have engaged with a Young Carer development worker who has delivered assemblies, workshops and drop-in sessions for pupils, and training for staff. There has been an increase in the number of carers being identified by schools and being supported by the Carers Centre as a result of this activity. In March 2023, primary schools participated in an event held at Eastwood Theatre to celebrate Young Carers Action Day, sharing their experiences and hearing from other supporters and contributors.

There have been awareness raising sessions with Head Teachers, DHTs and ASN Co-ordinators in our establishments in relation to our Corporate Parenting duties and what it means to be 'a good parent'. Members of the Quality Improvement Team have been working with the West Partnership to provide a suite of training materials for staff in schools to ensure that our care experienced children and young people receive the right support and nurture from all of our staff in our educational establishments.

In particular, work has taken place to develop protocols and systems with Education Admissions and schools in relation to our unaccompanied children and young people to ensure that appropriate education pathways are agreed. Professional learning for identified key staff, including school leaders, teaching staff and pupil support assistants, with a specific focus on trauma, has been developed and delivered in partnership with Education Scotland to address the needs of those young people arriving in our communities, often with little or no English. Digital technology has been extensively utilised to aid communication with school staff exploring new software packages to provide support. Schools have also been supported by partners to offer relevant experiences which complement skills development and enhance employability opportunities, developing independent living skills and travel skills. Moving forward, schools will work through the accredited Keeping the Promise Award and work will continue on the consistent collection of data to track the experiences and outcomes of all of our care experienced children and young people.

## Attendance

Overall, attendance in the Primary Sector increased in 2022-23 to 94.4% from 93.9% in 2021-22. The overall attendance increase in 2022-23 resulted in an increase in both male and female attendance to 94.4% for each respectively. The highest recorded attendance groups in 2022-23 were girls in P3 followed closely by P3 boys and P6 girls. In 2022-23, the proportion of learners with exceptionally high (>98%) attendance increased to 26.2% from 21.3% in 2021-22, which had been the lowest level in six years. This resulted in an increase in the proportion of learners with high (>95%) attendance for the 2022-23 year.

Attendances within the Secondary Sector are calculated for S1-S5 only. In 2022-23, overall attendance in the secondary sector was recorded as 91.1%; 0.3% less than 2021-22 and the lowest recorded in the past six years. In 2022-23, overall attendance of males and females was recorded as 91.7% and 90.5% respectively, remaining the same for boys and showing a reduction of 0.6% for girls from 2021-22. The highest recorded attendance groups in 2022-23 were S1 boys and girls again with 93.3% and 93.1% respectively. Attendance rates of girls was lower than boys for each stage from S1 to S5 with the lowest recorded in S3 at 88.8%. In 2022-23, the proportion of learners achieving the very high (>98%) and high (>95%) attendance bands slightly increased by 0.8% and 1% respectively to 13.9% and 27.5%. There was a decrease to 30.6% in 2022-23 from 31.9% the previous year in the proportion of those children recorded as having a medium rate of attendance.

Attendance stretch aims were identified for primary and secondary pupils. Attendance targets of 96% for primary and 93.5% for secondary were set. Improvements were recorded for all pupils in primary, with those living in quintiles 1 and 5 increasing at a similar rate, consequently the stretch gap remained the same at 5.2%. Overall attendance in the secondary sector remained relatively unchanged at 91.1%, a decrease of 0.1% from 2021-22. Pupils living in quintile 1 recorded an attendance rate of 85.4% and those living in quintile 5, 92.6%.

The Strategic Equity Plan 2022-26 has a clear focus on children and young people's readiness to learn through focussing on inclusion, participation, engagement and attendance. Stretch aim performance, along with qualitative evidence has been used to identify priorities and updated stretch aims.

## Exclusion Rates

The Education Department continue to work in partnership with schools to create and support opportunities for schools to provide nurturing interventions for young people, through both targeted and whole school interventions in order to manage behaviour in a proactive way.

In 2022-23, there were no permanent exclusions. The rate of exclusions in East Renfrewshire schools remained very low, however there was an increase in the overall number of exclusion incidents from 2021-22.

Overall exclusions across the primary and secondary sector increased to a rate of 3.2 incidents per 1000 pupils with 10.3 half days being lost per 1000 pupils, an increase from 2 and 6 respectively in 2021-22. Exclusion rates in 2022-23 are significantly lower than the national values of 16.6 exclusion incidents per 1000 pupils.

In 2022-23 there was one exclusion incident in the primary sector, giving a rate of 0.1 exclusion incidents per 1000 pupils with 0.6 half-days lost per 1000 pupils. There were no exclusion incidents in the primary sector in 2021-22. Nationally, the rate of exclusions in the primary sector is 6.4 incidents per 1000 pupils.

There were 55 exclusion incidents in the secondary sector in 2022-23, up from 41 the previous year. Consequently the rate of exclusions in the secondary sector increased to 6.7 incidents per 1000 pupils and 21.4 half days lost per 1000 secondary pupils (up from 5.1 half days lost per 1000 secondary pupils in 2021-22). The authority rate is significantly lower than the national rate of exclusions in the secondary sector at 33 incidents per 1000 pupils.

There were no exclusions of pupils from Isobel Mair School or from within our Care Experienced community in 2022-23.

Overall, the proportion of temporary exclusion incidents was split 85% boys and 15% girls for 2022-23.

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## Facilities Management

Janitorial and cleaning teams again delivered the highest standards of service in the face of challenges in the wider recruitment market. The team won APSE Best and Most Improved Performer in the Building Cleaning category 2022 again this year.

The Catering Service successfully retained the bronze Food for Life award for the 9th consecutive year; recognising that a minimum of 75% of dishes are prepared from unprocessed ingredients from sustainable and ethical sources. The service was also successfully reaccredited by Coeliac UK.

Barrhead High School Catering team were winners of the prestigious Foodservice Team of the Year Award 2022 at the Scottish School Awards in June 2023. They demonstrated their inclusivity, for example making adjustments to dining to accommodate learners with sensory needs; product sampling with young people to determine future menus; food training skills with teaching staff and learners. The school's Catering Manager was also a finalist in The Employee of the Year award.

Significant scenario planning has been undertaken to deliver differently nuanced deposit return scheme and full roll out of free school meals in primary. The team is well placed to manage future requirements.



## Investment

Education Recovery funding continued to be targeted to support recovery from the pandemic in line with the department's Building Back Better and Fairer framework. This continued Scottish Government funding allowed additional teaching and support staff posts, introduced during the pandemic, to be mainstreamed into school budgets allowing Head Teachers to target support as appropriate locally.

Despite the significant inflationary impact on all costs during 2022-23 the department budget returned an underspend of 0.9%.

A number of schools undertook some participatory budgeting activities during the year with plans to further embed this practice in the new academic year.

Pupils across all stages in St Clare's Primary engaged in focus groups to discuss what areas of the school could be improved; they identified the garden and school entrance. Their ideas were then shared with parents as part of the consultation process. There is now a Family Friendly Foyer and plans to improve the school gardens.

The Student Council Group of S1-S6 pupils in Barrhead High School consulted with their peers and parents across the school to consider how they could improve experiences for all with a particular focus on equity. Through their consultation they identified 3 options and the learners across the school voted on where the funding should be allocated. As a result of this process there is now a 'School Supper Cart' that provides warm food and snacks for young people who attend after school study/homework sessions.



## Modernisation

The current capital plan includes the following projects which have commenced or will be progressed over the coming years:

- The all-weather sports track pitch and running track at Mearns Castle High School was completed and made available to the school before the end of this session.
- The new build replacement campus for Neilston Primary School, St Thomas' Primary School and Madras Family Centre remains on track for opening during session 2023-24.
- Investment in both Crookfur Primary school and St Luke's High School are planned over the next few years to provide additional capacity for catchment pupils.
- A two classroom extension at Isobel Mair School is currently being progressed.
- Refurbishment of former office space within St John's Primary School will deliver an additional nursery for children in the Barrhead area.



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## What are we going to do now?

- Continue to implement the recommendations from both the National ASL review and the department's ASN review, including providing professional learning around inclusive practice in ELC settings and schools.
- Continue to implement the Social Justice Strategy 2022-2026.
- Continue to prioritise staff agency to support with the reduction of workload and bureaucracy in all establishments.
- Enhance emotional and mental wellbeing and build upon positive relationships to meet the needs of children, young people and families.
- In partnership with colleagues across the Council, continue to implement The Promise, updated Child Protection Guidance, UNCRC, our Corporate Parenting Policy, Child Poverty Action Plan and the GIRFEC refresh.
- Continue to build capacity within the system to ensure all establishments provide a curriculum that is unique to the community it serves and meets the needs of all its learners.
- Continue to seek investment to improve the learning environment for all out children and young people and expand provision as required.





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اگر آپ اس ایفایٹ میں درج معلومات کا ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو ہم سے رابطہ کریں

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of EducationDRAFT LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024 - 2027**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to seek Education Committee approval for the Education Department's draft Local Improvement Plan 2024 - 2027.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to approve the attached draft Local Improvement Plan 2024 – 2027.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Members will be aware of the previous [Local Improvement Plan 2023 – 2026](#). The Standards and Quality Report 2022 – 2023, provides an indication of the next steps the department, its services and educational establishments will take to ensure continuous improvement over the next few years.

4. The draft Local Improvement Plan takes full account of the East Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Community Plan, the Fairer East Ren Plan and Locality Plans, the department's contributions to the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan and the department's Strategic Equity Plan. Links to the National Improvement Framework (NIF) priorities and drivers have been incorporated into the plan.

**REPORT**

5. The draft Local Improvement Plan is designed to give an indication of the department's key areas for improvement over the next three years and is updated annually to take account of changing priorities. The draft plan is included as Appendix 1.

6. The Education Department's vision of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences, is about making a difference by improving outcomes for all, no matter the barriers to learning and achievement.

7. This plan is the strategy that underpins our vision. The how and what of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences. Four key areas have been identified as the main drivers of the plan:

- Empowerment and Leadership
- Social Justice and Wellbeing
- Pedagogy and Learning
- Attainment and Progress

8. Each driver is closely aligned to the National Improvement Framework 2024 and details the key outcomes, impact and activities of the department for 2024 – 2027.

9. The expected outcomes and impact are organised under these four key areas and have been reviewed and amended to reflect the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and the results of the department's ongoing self-evaluation.

10. The plan has a clear focus on improving outcomes for all our learners and the impact we expect to have on the experiences of the children, young people and adults who attend our schools and use our centres and services. In line with the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 the plan also sets out how we will address the inequalities of outcomes that exist for different equity groups and how we will achieve the priorities associated with the NIF.

11. High level areas for improvement are outlined and give an indication of the priorities for development and the activities the department, schools and services will take to make the necessary improvements in the quality of provision. It is expected that the authority will negotiate and work with managers and head teachers to use each service's / school's own self-evaluation, the information gathered through external evaluations and the Local Improvement Plan to identify priorities for inclusion in their own improvement plans.

12. The department evaluates its progress annually to identify strengths in current provision and areas where further improvement is required. The self-evaluation and evaluations of services and schools by the department's Quality Improvement Team, Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate help to identify steps which need to be taken to secure continuous improvement.

13. The timescale for the implementation of the plan is school sessions 2024 – 2025 to 2026 – 2027. The department will continue to report on the progress it has made with its Local Improvement Plan.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

14. The department will direct funding from its delegated budget to support the improvement agenda as outlined in the draft local improvement plan.

## **CONSULTATION**

15. Under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 education authorities are required to consult with pupils, staff, parents and all other interested parties on their priorities for improvement for the ensuing year. To this end, the department has consulted with pupils, staff and parents prior to the draft publication.

16. In addition, following approval by Education Committee, the department will issue the appended draft plan to all schools, parent councils, service managers and partners to gather



additional views of all stakeholders. Thereafter, the plan will be amended as appropriate, finalised and issued to schools, services and stakeholders.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

17. Education Committee is asked to approve the attached draft Local Improvement Plan 2024 – 2027.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
1 February 2024

### **Convener Contact Details**

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### **Appendix**

1. Local Improvement Plan 2024 - 2027

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# Local Improvement Plan 2024-27

East Renfrewshire Council Education Department



Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences



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## Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the Education Department's Local Improvement Plan for 2024 – 2027.

Complementing the Council's Vision for the Future, the plan details the ongoing commitment to deliver the highest quality services for its residents, whilst setting out ambitious outcomes that captures our aspirations and expectations for all learners and customers.

We are justly very proud of the successes of Education in East Renfrewshire. Since the foundation of East Renfrewshire in 1996, we have continually focused on raising attainment and achievement for all of our children and young people. As Convener of Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure I am very keen to know how all of our learners are doing, but I am fully aware that there are still groups of learners who need more help to reach their potential.

It is our moral imperative, to realise the Education Department's vision of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences, and make a difference by improving outcomes for all, no matter the barriers to learning and achievement.

These are challenging times financially for local government, but we must take decisions in an equitable way, targeting resource to increase attainment and improve achievement for those who need and deserve better outcomes, whilst still focusing on raising the bar for all our learners.

Overall, this plan is a proactive and systematic approach to bring about improvement and reach higher levels of performance, effectiveness, and success. I warmly commend it to you, and invite parents, carers and all our other partners to work with the staff in our ELC settings, schools and services in securing the outcomes and impacts identified.



**Councillor Andrew Anderson**  
Convener of Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure



## Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

In East Renfrewshire when you look at our vision, it is clear we have significant strengths and lots to be proud of as was evidenced in the department's Standards and Quality Report 2022 - 2023. We remain well placed as we look ahead to the timeframe of this plan 2024 - 2027 and beyond.

Our attainment levels remain very high, with our performance the highest in the country and our leaver destination information the highest to date with 98.5% of leavers in a positive destination.

Our ambition for all our children and young people is evident in all we do, therefore it is important that we focus rigorously on the quality of education we provide, and lead with both ambition and authenticity, to ensure that we improve the outcomes and results for all, particularly those who need us most. In terms of producing change, we have always had that focus in East Renfrewshire on continuous improvement. As we seek to navigate the next 2-3 years we need to have the right priorities and actions in place to support improvement. I believe this plan has these priorities and actions.

I make no apology for my desire for East Renfrewshire to be a world class learning environment, with Everyone Attaining and Everyone Achieving, however it is imperative that in our ELC settings, schools' and services that we also cultivate positive values and attitudes, igniting that joy and love of learning, which leads to curiosity, creativity and a commitment to lifelong education. We want not only to have the highest attainment in Scotland, we also want our learners to be happy, confident, resilient, engaged, motivated, ambitious, social, caring, empathetic, reflective, and independent. Our ELC settings and schools commitment to regularly review and plan a curriculum that is relevant and meets learners' needs, along with a continued focus on high quality learning, teaching and assessment, will enable us to continue to deliver Excellent Experiences and realise these aspirations for all of our children and young people.

This plan is the strategy that underpins our vision. The 'how and what' of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences. Four key areas have been identified as the main drivers of the plan. Each driver is closely aligned to the National Improvement Framework 2024 and details the key outcomes, impact and activities of the Department for 2024 – 2027.

Collaboration is a key driving force behind the successful implementation of our Local Improvement Plan 2024 – 2027 and for collaboration we need a 'unity of purpose' within our learning system as we strive to improve outcomes and experiences for all our learners. Vital to this unity is the Council's values of trust and kindness. Going forward, demonstrating these values in simple practical ways will be fundamental in ensuring we continue to create a culture which is cohesive and in which we can all achieve.

I would like to thank all of you in advance for your commitment and contribution to the continued success of East Renfrewshire.



**Mark Ratter**  
Director of Education



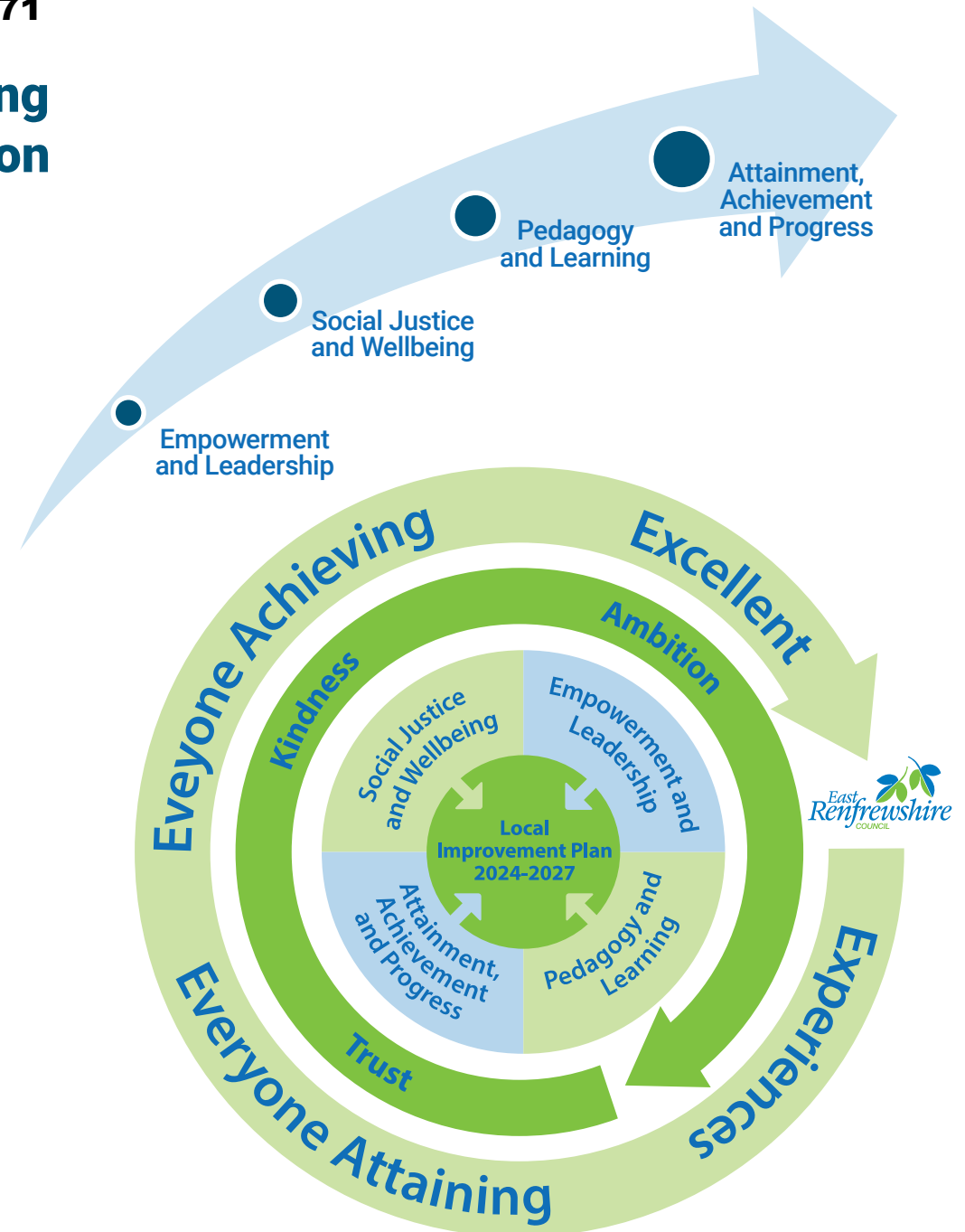
# Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences in Action

Through extensive engagement with our pupils, staff and parents we have identified four priorities for 2024 - 2027 which will enable us to achieve our vision. Our Local Improvement Plan for 2024 – 2027 is organised under these areas.

The Local Improvement Plan outlines the high level areas for improvement for all services, ELC settings and schools and is informed by the Council's Vision for the Future and Outcome Delivery Plan. Links between the National Improvement Framework priorities and drivers have been incorporated into the plan. The West Partnership Improvement Plan 2023/24 sets out the areas that the eight Local Authorities will collaborate on regionally to support and challenge establishments to improve.

This plan lists the expected outcomes and impact under the four key priorities. This is a high level plan which contains a list of areas for improvement and outlines the actions we will take over the next three years to achieve the expected impact and outcomes. Complementing this plan are other key documents and strategies which detail additional performance measures, ensuring alignment, cohesion whilst avoiding duplication. The list is extensive but it is not intended that each ELC setting, school or service should include every strand, or even every key area, in its improvement plan for the next three years.

The purpose of this Local Improvement Plan is to help and guide individual settings, schools and services in planning for improvement, not to prescribe what those improvements should be or how they should be taken forward.



# Empowerment and Leadership

East Renfrewshire Education Department has strived to build an empowered, connected, self-improving education system focusing on excellence through equity for all children and young people. ELC settings, schools and services are empowered well to lead improvements in education provision. They have the responsibility, ownership and accountability, within flexible frameworks of guidance and support, to bring about improvement within their own context. Using self-evaluation and the department’s Local Improvement Plan, which aligns local and National Improvement Framework priorities, leaders are able to identify individual areas for improvement.

We are committed to empowering minds, shaping futures and fostering lifelong learning through high quality education. To do this we will support and promote professional learning

and leadership development which focuses on building capacity at all levels for improvement with a focus on learning and teaching, curriculum and improving outcomes for all learners.

The department will continue to foster a supportive environment where all children, young people, parents and staff feel valued, encouraged and equipped to take initiative and make meaningful contributions to school improvement.

Collaboration within, across and beyond ELC settings, schools and services in our local authority is the synergy which will enable us to achieve our collective goals and aspirations for learners, parents, services, staff, partners and the school community.

## National Priorities

- **Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education**
- **Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy**
- **Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people**
- **Improvement in children and young people’s health and wellbeing**
- **Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people**

NIF Drivers	Expected Outcome / Impact (what we will measure and report on)	Activities (what we will do to bring about improvement)
School and ELC Leadership Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism Parent/Carer Involvement and Engagement School and ELC Improvement Performance Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ethos of high expectations and achievement in every school and service</li> <li>• A culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement in all schools and services</li> <li>• A skilled and confident workforce</li> <li>• A culture of professional enquiry in all establishments</li> <li>• An increase in the percentage of schools evaluated as ‘good’ or better for leadership of change</li> <li>• A consistently high satisfaction level of residents engaging with our services</li> <li>• Higher levels of parental engagement in their children’s learning and in the life of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the revised leadership strategy.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Parental Engagement and Involvement Strategy 2021 – 2024.</li> <li>• Build system capacity to support continuous improvement through robust self evaluation processes and high quality career long professional learning.</li> <li>• Continue to prioritise staff agency to support with the reduction of workload and bureaucracy in all establishments.</li> </ul>



# Social Justice and Wellbeing

The importance of relationships across the system cannot be underestimated. We must ensure a culture where children and young people are listened to, and their views valued and acted upon by a skilled, knowledgeable, confident and compassionate workforce. East Renfrewshire’s Healthier Minds Framework is designed to ensure all children, young people, families and staff have the information, support and help to understand and foster mental wellbeing. Everyone who features in the life of children and young people has a role in contributing to this.

East Renfrewshire’s Social Justice Framework makes it clear that promoting equality should be understood as a way of leading learning, teaching and assessment - not as an additional task or a separate area of the curriculum. We cannot predict what the world or society is going to be like in the future, therefore we must build an education system focused on equality, equity and children’s rights.

The Education Department will continue to focus on improving redistribution, recognition and representation in six key areas of practice: use of resources; learning, teaching and assessment; relationships with learners, families and the community; recruitment and retention; professional learning and development and curriculum design to ensure we meet the needs of all in East Renfrewshire ELC settings, schools and services.

We must continue to invest in improving the experience of inclusion for all pupils, personalising support and meeting individual needs in an educational context that is meaningful and engaging for the individual child or young person are what make the difference. It’s not easy. It requires high levels of commitment, hard work, flexibility and creativity. Our Educational Psychology Service play a pivotal role in supporting pupils and parents, whilst building staff capacity to meet learners’ needs. Resources are of course hugely important. So are attitudes, values, mindset and staff wellbeing.

## National Priorities

- **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**

<b>NIF Drivers</b>	<b>Expected Outcome / Impact (what we will measure and report on)</b>	<b>Activities (what we will do to bring about improvement)</b>
School and ELC Leadership  Teacher and Practitioner  Professionalism Parent/Carer Involvement and Engagement  School and ELC Improvement  Performance Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A rights based culture, centred on Getting It Right For Every Child</li> <li>• Practices and experiences which ensure that the needs of children, young people and adults are identified and addressed</li> <li>• Maintain and where possible improve upon the already low exclusions and high attendance rates in our schools, especially for looked after children</li> <li>• Maintain and where possible reduce the number of children and young people reporting they experience bullying and/or racist behaviour</li> <li>• A positive culture in health and wellbeing in every school and service</li> <li>• Resources which lead to improvements for learners and service users</li> <li>• An increase in activities which support prevention and early intervention, improve outcomes and reduce inequalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Strategic Equity Plan 2023 – 2026 and support and challenge school use of the Pupil Equity Fund.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the recommendations from both the National ASL review and the Department’s ASN review, including providing professional learning around inclusive practice in ELC settings and schools.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Social Justice Strategy 2022 - 2026.</li> <li>• Enhance emotional and mental wellbeing and build upon positive relationships to meet the needs of children, young people and families.</li> <li>• In partnership with colleagues across the Council, continue to implement The Promise, updated Child Protection Guidance, UNCRC, our Corporate Parenting Policy, Child Poverty Action Plan and the GIRFEC refresh.</li> </ul>

Children and young people need to learn and develop the skills, abilities and resilience to adapt to situations that they may face in the future. Although knowledge is important, we must have an education system that teaches children how to access and apply knowledge. A system that motivates and inspires learners and nurtures a love for learning and learning behaviour for life. Children and young people should be able to identify as learners and have an understanding of what that means. We need a world class system in terms of qualifications; however we want children and young people to have learned how to learn and have the capacity to continue to learn beyond school.

High quality pedagogy from early years to senior phase is required, within a curriculum that is relevant, flexible and responsive. We will continue to maintain a weighting on literacy,

numeracy and health and wellbeing, however other areas must be decluttered, to ensure the vision and principles of Curriculum for Excellence as a skills based curriculum, that encourages creativity, curiosity, problem solving and other transferable skills is realised. We will invest in professional learning, to support understanding of the balance between knowledge and skills, especially in the secondary sector.

We will continue to support and challenge ELC settings and schools to review and improve their curriculum and learner pathways, ensuring adherence to the seven design principles of Curriculum for Excellence – challenge and enjoyment, breadth, coherence, personalisation and choice, relevance, progression and depth.

## National Priorities

- **Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education**
- **Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy**
- **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**

NIF Drivers	Expected Outcome / Impact (what we will measure and report on)	Activities (what we will do to bring about improvement)
School and ELC Leadership  Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism  Curriculum and Assessment  Parent/Carer Involvement and Engagement  School and ELC Improvement  Performance Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ethos of high expectations and achievement in every school and service</li> <li>• A skilled and confident workforce</li> <li>• A culture of professional enquiry in all establishments</li> <li>• An increase in the percentage of schools evaluated as ‘good’ or better for leadership of change</li> <li>• A consistently high satisfaction level of residents engaging with our services</li> <li>• Higher levels of parental engagement in their children’s learning and in the life of the school</li> <li>• An increase in the percentage of schools evaluated as ‘very good’ or better for learning, teaching and assessment</li> <li>• A curriculum which enables all children, young people and adults to be successful, confident, responsible and effective in school, their work, their community and internationally</li> <li>• Learners’ experiences support them to develop their personalities, talents, mental, spiritual and physical abilities to their potential</li> <li>• An increase in opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, understanding and the skills for life and active participation in a global multicultural society and Scotland’s place in it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to build the capacity within the system to ensure all establishments provide a curriculum that is unique to the community it serves and meets the needs of all its learners.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Numeracy and Mathematics Strategy 2023 – 2026.</li> <li>• Update and implement the Literacy Strategy 2024 – 2027.</li> <li>• Implement the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy 2024 – 2027.</li> <li>• Continue to seek investment to improve the learning environment for all our children and young people and expand provision as required.</li> </ul>

# Attainment, Achievement and Progress <sup>75</sup>

East Renfrewshire’s Education Department is highly ambitious for all its children and young people. Our role is clear in that we have to create the right conditions and learning experiences to enable our pupils to flourish as individuals. We make no apologies for our aim of being the highest performing mainland authority in Scotland in terms of Curriculum for Excellence and Senior Phase attainment. Attainment and progress reflects the acquisition of knowledge, skills and goals of our children and young people. Attaining provides a sense of accomplishment, builds confidence, and often opens the doors to new opportunities, further growth and learning.

It is vital that our curriculum and pedagogy is matched appropriately to the needs of our learners, ensuring all have the right weighting of challenge and support to enable them to make appropriate progress and attain.

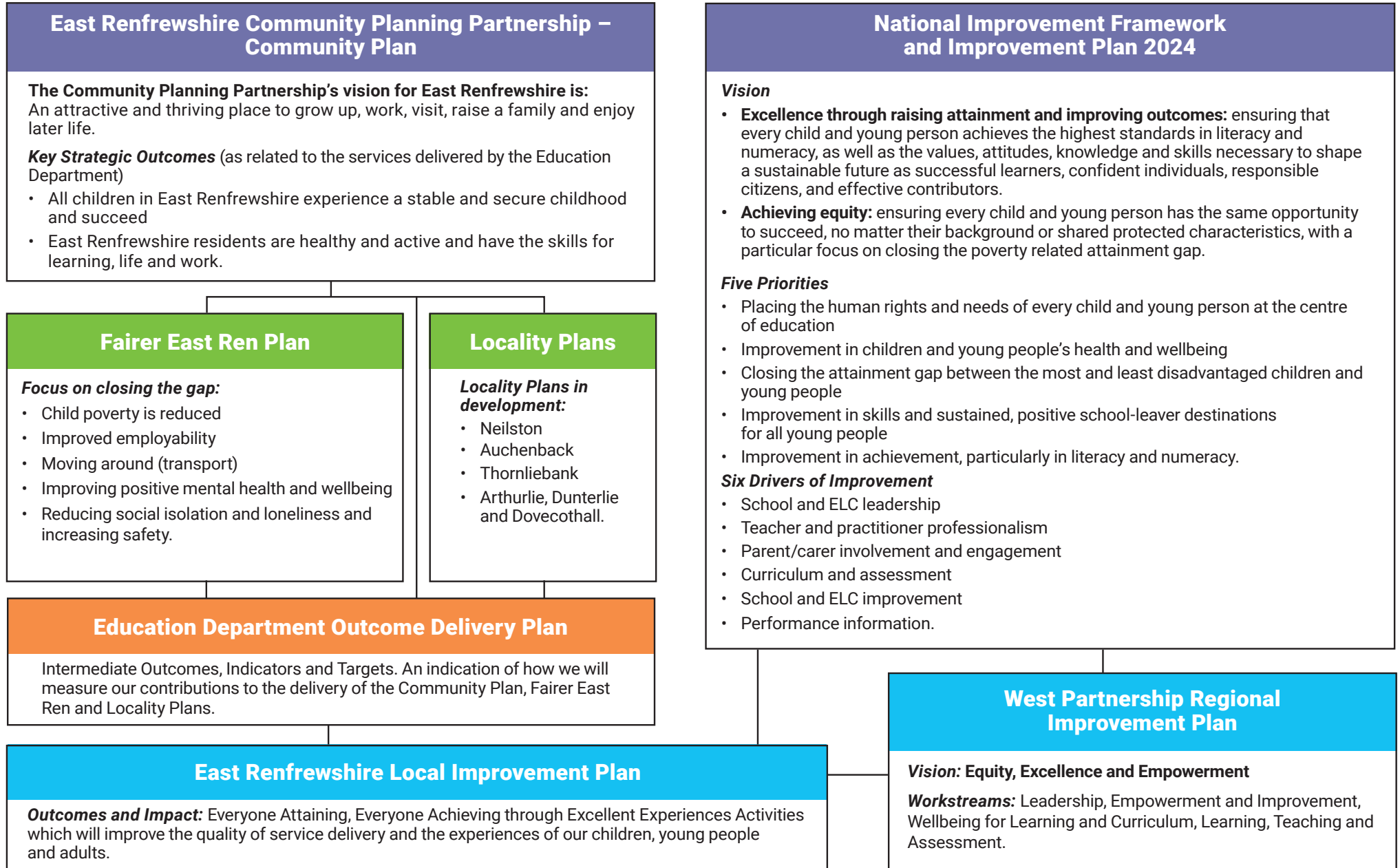
By creating an ethos of achievement and high expectations within a culture of self-improvement in all ELC settings, schools and services, we would look to see all our children, young people and adults attaining at the highest level. We are fully aware that not all learners have the same opportunities, therefore equity is at the heart of our approach to attainment. We will ensure our ELC settings, schools and services are resourced to make a difference for those who need them most.

## National Priorities

- Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- 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

NIF Drivers	Expected Outcome / Impact (what we will measure and report on)	Activities (what we will do to bring about improvement)
School and ELC Leadership  Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism  Curriculum and Assessment  School and ELC Improvement  Performance Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be the highest performing mainland council area as measured by national examinations for school leavers</li> <li>• Improved attainment in the senior phase</li> <li>• An increase in the number of pupils, school leavers and adults with well-developed employability skills</li> <li>• Be the highest performing mainland council area as measured by Curriculum for Excellence levels</li> <li>• Improved literacy and numeracy attainment throughout the years of the broad general education</li> <li>• An improvement in the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people</li> <li>• An increase in the percentage of schools evaluated as ‘good’ or better for raising attainment and achievement</li> <li>• An improvement in the percentage of young children reaching all of the expected developmental outcomes on entry to primary school</li> <li>• Continue to be the highest performing mainland council area as measured by the annual participation measure for school leavers</li> <li>• A further improvement in school leaver destinations</li> <li>• An increase in the percentage of pupils agreeing they have opportunities to celebrate personal achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in data and collaborative inquiry to support and challenge schools to develop their approaches to tackle the attainment gap.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Developing the Young Workforce Action Plan 2022-2025.</li> <li>• Offer a range of learning opportunities for adult learners to gain skills for learning, life and work.</li> <li>• Continue to work in partnership with ELC settings, schools and ERC Culture and Leisure Trust to ensure all children and young people have high quality opportunities for achievement that are recognised and celebrated.</li> <li>• Continue to build capacity of the department and schools to gather information on pupils’ progress in all curricular areas and in developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens).</li> </ul>

# Plan Structure







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Faodar am pàipear seo fhaotainn ann an Gàidhlig agus ann an cruthan eile mar ann an clò mòr agus Braille. Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh, feuch gun cuir sibh fios gu Customer First air 0141 577 3001 no post-d gu [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

इस सूचना-पत्र में उल्लेखित सूचना यदि आप हिन्दी अनुवाद में चाहे तो कृपया सम्पर्क करें।

如果您想得到该资料所含信息的译文，请联系：

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اگر آپ اس لیفلیٹ میں درج معلومات کا ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو ہم سے رابطہ کریں

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of Education2023 - 2028 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY**PURPOSE**

1. To seek Education Committee approval for the 2023 – 2028 refreshed Leadership Strategy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Education Committee is asked to:
  - a. approve the 2023 - 2028 Leadership Strategy;
  - b. request that the Director of Education bring reports to Education Committee on the impact of its implementation.

**BACKGROUND**

3. East Renfrewshire Education Department's vision statement; "Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences" reflects the Department's ambition to provide outstanding schools and early learning and childcare settings that ensure all learners have the skills, capabilities and motivation to reach their own high aspirations and fulfil their potential.
4. The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (2023), continues to set the vision and expectation of priorities for Scottish education and, together with the National Discussion on the Future of Scottish Education (2023) and the Hayward Review of Qualifications and Assessment (2023), is intended to provide the opportunity for fresh innovative ideas to drive improvement. If our schools are to translate the aspirations of the National Improvement Framework (2023, p5) in '*ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap*', we will need to ensure robust levels of leadership at all levels of the system. Such an endeavour will require our school leaders to be selfless, reflective, restless learners with the ability and desire to develop leadership in others.
5. The Education Department recognises that a major challenge for East Renfrewshire schools and centres is how to stay bold, ambitious and build on what has already been accomplished in a way that can achieve greater equity for all learners. Investment in building leadership capacity is therefore essential if we are to bring about required change in the system. However, such investment is only effective if it makes a real and sustainable difference where it matters most, that is, in improved experiences and outcomes for all learners.

6. This refreshed strategy puts forward the proposition that if leadership is encouraged and fostered at every level (including learners), then the possibility of attaining excellence is available to all regardless of their background or prior achievement.

## REPORT

7. For ease of reference our refreshed strategy for Leadership has been divided into three distinct papers;
  - a. The Evaluation Report (Appendix 1) – which gives a summary of the findings of the evaluation into the impact of our original strategy.
  - b. The Strategy Paper (Appendix 2) – which provides a summary of the key aims, targets, action plan and expected outcomes.
  - c. The Thinkpiece – which is intended as a stimulus to encourage deeper discussion across the education department, and to offer challenge and suggested support. Further detail on this paper can be accessed online <https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/our-schools>.
8. In 2019, the ERC Leadership Strategy introduced the notion of the authentic leader together with a move towards a distributive rather than a distributed or delegated form of leadership. A number of key aims and actions were outlined to facilitate the development of these concepts.
9. The Evaluation Report (Appendix 1), presents the findings of a number of teaching, early learning and childcare staff and leaders, who were tasked with holistically evaluating the effective use of distributive leadership through professional inquiry. Our evaluation has revealed an enthusiasm and desire for continuing to move towards a distributive model of leadership which offers meaningful opportunities for practitioners to positively influence learner outcomes and which provide the impetus for career aspiration.
10. The overall review findings also reveal great progress in our educational establishments in implementing many of the key aims of our 2019 strategy. The Key Performance Indicators and Targets achieved during the period 2017 – 2022 are detailed in the Strategy Paper (Appendix 2, p15) together with targets for the next five years.
11. The 2023 strategy builds on the importance of distributive leadership in action as a strength of system leadership in enabling the collective processes through which, individuals and teams work together to create the conditions for change. It has been proven that this collective efficacy impacts positively on educational improvement. Such opportunities for disciplined collaboration and the positive impact for staff and learners are clearly evidenced in ERC in the findings of exercises such as transition reviews and collaborative improvement visits where leaders from across the educational estate participate in peer review and moderation exercises.
12. Our refreshed strategy outlines how we will continue to provide a clear, progressive educational leadership pathway which embodies the responsibility of all leaders to build the professional capacity of staff and ensure a positive impact on young people's learning.
13. A robust, relevant and fit-for-purpose suite of leadership learning programmes and opportunities that draw on local, regional and international research will be developed.



These programmes will be enhanced with knowledge and experience gained through work with our university partners in establishing research hubs within every high school in East Renfrewshire with the expectation that the knowledge gained will be disseminated to our primary and early years colleagues. In addition, a robust suite of career long professional learning (CLPL) will continue to be developed to meet our unique local needs, supported by the expertise of our Quality Improvement Team and Educational Psychology Service as well as the skills and knowledge of our teachers and leaders. This coherent approach will ensure the strengthening of both individual and collective leadership capacity across our school estate and beyond.

14. The key aims as set out in our 2019 strategy remain relevant but have been refreshed to ensure they are now appropriate to the context of the Department's leadership aspirations for all staff. The revised key aims for 2023 -2028 are set out in the Strategy Paper (Appendix 2, page 8) and will be considered within a new and evolving context of national and local policy when informing both action planning and target setting.
15. This refreshed strategy for leadership will inform and empower school and establishment leaders to set their own actions which will foster a culture of distributive leadership at all levels within the context of their own setting. The Strategy Paper provides staff with appropriate action planning which sets out our Departmental expectations to ensure all establishments continue to proactively move towards a self-sustaining system of leadership which is values based and has the ambitions and aspirations of our learners at the heart of everything we do. Critical indicators and outcomes are also detailed in this Strategy Paper and will measure the impact of the activities which we will undertake to deliver our Key Aims (Appendix 2, pages 9-13).
16. The Education Department, schools and early learning and childcare settings undertake annual self-evaluation exercises which are summarised in Standards and Quality Reports. These reports include progress made in meeting the priorities of the National Improvement Framework which includes leadership as a key driver and will detail the steps taken to develop distributive leadership and professional inquiry at all levels, providing evidence of impact for staff and learners.
17. As is current practice, we shall continue to report annually to East Renfrewshire Council Education Committee on the attainment and achievements of our pupils in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase. We will also report on the quality of education provided by our establishments through Education Scotland school/early years setting inspection reports and Care Inspectorate reports. These will provide further evidence of our progress in implementing the actions set out within this strategy.

## **CONSULTATION**

18. In formulating this refreshed Leadership Strategy, East Renfrewshire Education Department has demonstrated its commitment to considering the views of the workforce. Staff at all levels within early years, primary and secondary schools contributed during this process. In addition, we will continue to gauge the views of both local government and teaching staff to ensure we instil an ethos of collaborative working throughout the implementation phase and beyond.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

19. The cost of implementing the Leadership Strategy will be met through the Education Department's devolved budget and individual Schools devolved CLPL budget.

## CONCLUSION

20. The 2023 – 2028 Strategy has been devised to provide the stimulus for staff at all levels to place a renewed focus on leadership within our establishments.
21. International Studies by McKinsey identify inspirational leadership as the foundation upon which world class teaching and learning is built. The emphasis on imperfect leadership is to ensure that our strategy does not focus upon the polarisation of one type of leadership as good or bad, but to ensure it provides direction as to how individual leaders can themselves build capacity. Our research indicates that to secure future improvement, more attention needs to be given to developing leaders who can lead and learn in unpredictable situations.
22. Sustainable leadership must be a shared responsibility. If we are successful in sustaining our vision of true distributive leadership we will ensure that East Renfrewshire becomes sector leading thus attracting and retaining the best teachers and leaders and in turn consistently delivering those excellent experiences for our young people.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

23. Education Committee is asked to:
  - a. approve the draft Leadership Strategy;
  - b. request that the Director of Education bring reports to Education Committee on the impact of its implementation.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
1 February 2024

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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East Renfrewshire Education Department

# Leadership Strategy 2019-2022 Evaluation Report



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## Acknowledgements

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution the following staff have made to the research and findings of this document as well as to its strategic vision for future leadership in East Renfrewshire Education Department.

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Catherine McCrea, Depute Head Teacher, St. Ninian's High School

Nina McCue, Teacher, St. Luke's High School

Jo McGregor, Depute Head Teacher, Carolside Primary School

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Lesley Orr, Principal Teacher, Barrhead High School

Gary Train, Teacher, Overlee Family Centre



## Executive Summary

This executive summary outlines the main findings from a review of East Renfrewshire Council's (ERC) Leadership Strategy 2019 – 2022 and the proposed next steps for our refreshed 5 year strategy for 2023 – 2028. The main findings are as follows-

- In 2019, the ERC Leadership Strategy recognised that a bold and ambitious approach to leadership was required, one that recognised that developing leadership capacity takes time and is a continual process involving constant reflection and re-evaluation from learned experience. The notion of the authentic leader was introduced together with a move towards a distributive rather than a distributed or delegated form of leadership. A number of key aims and actions were outlined to facilitate the development of these concepts.
- In keeping true to the principles of this strategy, a selection of teaching, Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff and leaders were tasked with evaluating the effective use of distributive leadership. Their findings reveal that, since 2019, there is much to be celebrated in the progress towards the key aims of our strategy in terms of leadership development in our establishments.
- The overall review findings conclude there is an enthusiasm and desire for continuing to move towards a distributive model of leadership which offers meaningful opportunities for practitioners to positively influence learner outcomes and which provide the impetus for career aspiration. But senior leaders must be receptive to ensuring that any form of distributed leadership is disciplined and meaningful with a focus on outcomes and impact on learners.
- Building on the conclusions from this research our renewed strategy seeks to clarify the type of leadership we desire as a Department and how that leadership should be nurtured and embedded in our culture. As such, the refreshed 2023 -2028 strategy aims to clarify our thinking around authentic leadership and offers an interpretation that suggests that authenticity manifests itself in a leader's local, professional and personal context and in our relationships with others. Our thinking on leadership development will move to an exploration of the term phrased by Munby (2019)<sup>1</sup> of '*imperfect leadership*' which displays authenticity in its truest sense.
- Our renewed strategy suggests that established leaders should also be evoking the type of 'systems leadership' in which leaders at any level, exert influence beyond their immediate context, and are intentionally deployed to drive change and invest in improving other schools in addition to their own. The strategy builds on the importance of distributive leadership in action as a strength of system leadership in enabling the collective processes through which individuals and teams work together to create the conditions for change and which impacts positively on educational improvement.
- The literature study which was undertaken to inform our next steps, found that high performing leaders and thus effective leadership development was underpinned by the following elements;
  - Learning on the job;
  - Exposure to outstanding practice in other contexts/ collaborative practices;
  - Access to high quality research;
  - Focused feedback from credible peers, mentors or coaches;
  - Time for reflection.

- The key aims have been refreshed within the context of the Department’s leadership aspirations for all staff and have been considered within a new and evolving context of national and local policy when informing our action planning and target setting. Our next steps for leadership therefore focuses upon our delivery of the aforementioned key aims with the above elements for effective leadership development as the foundations for our actions.

## REVISED KEY AIMS

- Effectively develop resilient and reflective practitioners who consistently deliver high quality learning experiences within and beyond their own setting by engaging individually and collaboratively in contemporary, meaningful and inspiring professional learning.
  - Cultivate an informed, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across all settings by utilising disciplined collaboration which not only develops and enriches the leadership skills of practitioners but provides a positive impact on outcomes for all learners.
  - Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of highly effective leaders, as well as the confidence to begin to explore their own authentic style of leadership.
  - Empower and support all newly appointed Heads of Establishment and Senior Leaders to develop their own authentic leadership in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.
  - Utilise the expertise and depth of experience of established Senior Leaders to inform policy and practice beyond their own settings locally, regionally and nationally to unite in a single focus on collaborative approaches to systemic change aimed at improving the outcomes for all learners.
- A renewed emphasis on ensuring true distributive leadership is the golden thread and should provide leadership opportunities which make a positive measurable contribution to improved experiences and outcomes for our learners, and therefore facilitate the development of authentic leaders who lead with their values at the heart of everything they do.



## Review of 2019 Key Aims 1 and 2

- Key Aim 1:** *Effectively build the foundations of confident, resilient and reflective practitioners who consistently deliver high quality learning experiences for all learners within and beyond their own classroom by engaging individually and collaboratively in the most relevant, meaningful and inspiring professional learning.*
- Key Aim 2:** *Cultivate a collaborative, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across schools, centres and beyond by developing the leadership skills of teachers.*

Donaldson (2011, p2)<sup>2</sup> recognised that, *‘Leadership is based on fundamental values and habits of mind that must be acquired and fostered from entry into the teaching profession.’* This wisdom was echoed in our 2019 Leadership Strategy which presented the above Aims designed to ensure that in ERC, education professionals in the early stage of their career, experience a culture, along with a wide range of professional learning opportunities, which supports the development of values, knowledge, skills and abilities to lead learning effectively while making a difference to the lives of all learners.

In line with the expected outcome of Key Aim 1, the Department has refreshed its offering to probationers by developing an extensive Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) complemented by a new handbook which is shared with all probationer teachers in advance of their placement. The ERC TIS provides a comprehensive programme of compulsory and optional Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities linked to local and national priorities culminating in a professional inquiry element. We acknowledge that in terms of our probationers a *‘commitment to career-long professional learning is a critical part of developing [their] professionalism... enquiring and collaborative professionalism is a powerful force in developing teachers’ agency’* (GTCS 2021, p4)<sup>3</sup>. This approach underpins our professional learning offer during the probationary year. The professional inquiry element has also been strengthened in line with the Aims of our Leadership Strategy to ensure it is an impactful experience for all probationer teachers, developing their research skills and ability to relate these to improving learner experiences. A showcase event is held at the end of the year to share and celebrate learning with fellow peer colleagues and with senior staff from all establishments and the

wider Education Department. It is expected that within their first year as fully qualified teachers, their professional inquiries will be taken forward into their new classrooms thus contributing to a learning continuum and culture of research informed practice. It is encouraging to note that in May 2023 most inquiry reports submitted by our probationers included reference to sharing their learning with colleagues at establishment level learning and teaching events. Head Teacher feedback indicates that the professional inquiry element of the TIS positively contributes to achievement of the school improvement priorities.

For our Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff, a suite of online resources has also been developed by the Department to support practitioners who are new to this sector of education. This resource builds on the National Induction Resource for ELC, setting it within the local context of East Renfrewshire.

In addition to these programmes of support from the Department, each establishment provides pastoral support and professional learning for our probationer teachers and Child Development Officers (CDOs). This includes: high quality mentoring; school level professional learning programmes which complement and build on the Department CLPL programme; support to engage in impactful professional inquiry and to share learning with colleagues and opportunities to observe more experienced colleagues. In evaluations conducted at the end the last two years, almost all probationer teachers (99%) who responded to our end of year evaluation, agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning experiences provided by their establishment develop their professional skills and abilities.



Overall, the professional learning offer to probationer teachers and CDOs continues to evolve in line with the key features of effective learning as set out by the Scottish Government model of professional learning i.e. learning that deepens knowledge and understanding; learning by inquiring; learning as collaborative. This model also places teachers as, *‘the drivers and enactors of change for improvement through their commitment to their own ongoing professional learning and development within and beyond their classrooms’* (GTCS, 2019)<sup>4</sup>. It is encouraging that all probationer teachers (100%) who responded to the evaluative questionnaire agreed that professional learning experiences provided by the Department developed their professional skills and abilities, and almost all (91%) agreed that they developed as an inquiring professional through involvement in professional inquiry. In the evaluations conducted at the end of the last two years, almost all (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would encourage a future TIS probationer to choose ERC as a local authority. From the above evaluations, one probationer teacher stated:

*“This year has been amazing and being in such a welcoming school and authority has been a privilege. The most positive aspect of this year was getting to work alongside such a welcoming department where nothing is an issue. I really cannot thank them enough or the local authority for supporting me through this year.”*

In line with Aim 2 of our 2019 strategy, comprehensive support for the development of teacher professionalism continues beyond probationary training and into early career teaching. All employees are offered the opportunity for masters level learning, which until 2023 has been supported with a substantial financial contribution from the Scottish Government. Since 2017, the Department has facilitated 95 teachers and ELCC professionals to achieve Masters level learning and 290 staff are either presently engaged in or have achieved masters level modules through our partner universities. Engagement in academic study enhances the strategic outlook of our staff enabling them to recognise their place in the system and the contribution they make as well as consolidating knowledge and experience to ensure practitioners translate this into quality in the classroom and



playroom. One Senior Officer when reflecting on her experience with a masters level Early Years Pedagogue course stated:

*“I loved it, it totally opened my eyes and gave me much of the knowledge I have today re Early Years pedagogy and play in primary school.”*

In addition to an extensive CLPL offering within and across establishments and clusters, education professionals in ERC are increasingly being exposed to a culture of distributive leadership. The effect of distributive leadership in effecting the attainment of Aim 2 was investigated by a group of unpromoted teachers and ELCC staff across the Department and their summary findings are attached as Appendix 1.

This practitioner inquiry group identified from their academic research that adopting a distributive leadership model was a powerful strategy for long-term improvement both in terms of learner achievement and attainment. In addition, rooted in a clear model of collegiality, aspects of distributive leadership were found to lead to shared decision-making in schools, with an increased culture of trust and staff ownership and accountability. Furthermore, due to the range of practitioners involved in a distributive model, establishments



were found to develop a greater range of solutions and interventions in meeting the needs of both pupils and practitioners leading to wholesale improvement. To support their findings the academic literature reviewed by the practitioner inquiry group indicated that distributive leadership can lead to increased individual and collective capacity and a focus on “team over self” (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019, p.5)<sup>5</sup>.

Following their discussion of the core literature and with a view to evaluating the effective use of distributive leadership across the authority, the inquiry group established an agreed definition of distributive leadership, which was used to guide all aspects of their subsequent research:

*‘Nurturing leadership at all levels of an organisation to build capacity for improvement and change.’*

Through a questionnaire devised by the research inquiry group, followed by a set of structured interviews, most un-promoted practitioners who responded (78%) agreed they have opportunities to lead on aspects of improvement priorities, while a majority (70%) agreed that, in their setting, a culture of nurturing leadership at all levels was building capacity for improvement. Most (81%) collaborate regularly with colleagues to enhance the quality of learning experiences they provide and most (82%) have opportunities to access relevant and impactful professional learning. These results would suggest that many practitioners are engaging in activities that Harris (2014)<sup>6</sup> would ascribe to distributive leadership in order to positively influence and improve outcomes for learners i.e. collaborating,

accessing professional learning and being empowered to direct change in their classroom. As corroboration one Primary Head Teacher confirmed the impact of distributive leadership initiatives in their school stating;

*“Distributive Leadership across my setting is underpinned by trust and empowerment. Senior managers ensure staff do not feel micro-managed but instead are encouraged and supported to improve outcomes for learners. As a result practitioners understand their learner’s needs better and how best to meet their needs and consequently we have seen incremental gains in attainment.”*

However, only a majority of respondents (64%) agreed that ‘I feel like a leader within my setting’, with the research group subsequently suggesting that those staff who responded in this way do not always connect the aforementioned activities with leadership. Through structured interviews, top-down allocation of leadership roles from promoted members of staff was identified as a practice that occurs in many establishments. A concern arose with a perception that some senior staff delegate aspects of their remit to un-promoted staff in the guise of leadership opportunities. This is in contrast to the expectations of Aim 2 of our leadership strategy where leadership opportunities should be nurturing, inspiring and meaningful. As a result, either a perceived or real lack of support and lack of transparency was reported, leading to staff feeling excluded from meaningful opportunities to develop or worse feelings of being ‘used’ were highlighted in the research results.

The results presented by the practitioner inquiry group, reveal that distributive leadership can just as easily be associated with negative qualities as it can with the positive. Some leaders may genuinely feel that they are authentically distributing leadership but the feedback from others may suggest that this is simply not the case (Department for Education and Skills, 2007)<sup>7</sup>. Rather than distributive leadership there is *'distributed pain'* where leadership opportunities equate with more work, which in turn undermines the creation of a culture of trust (Youngs, 2009)<sup>8</sup>. It takes a secure, strong leader to be able to facilitate distributive leadership whilst also retaining a firm hold on the direction of the school. It takes a leader who can empower but also intervene and who has the trust and respect of their team (Harris, 2014)<sup>6</sup>.

Without the support of each Head Teacher, Head of Establishment and other senior leaders, distributive leadership cannot take place in an authentic and trusting manner. As a Department we acknowledge that our leaders will ensure that every element of expertise is devoted to improving establishment performance and learner outcomes, however the very best leaders build collective capacity as a positive means of securing change which leads to sustained improvement (Hargreaves et al, 2010)<sup>9</sup>. As such, we must ensure the concept of distributive leadership is not only understood but is practiced in a fair and transparent manner building trust and confidence in the system and capacity for leadership in all practitioners.

It is encouraging that, across our settings, arrangements for Quality Conversations and Professional Review and Development (PRD) are increasingly *'set within a culture of professional trust and positive relationships'* (GTCS, 2019, p3)<sup>10</sup> as well as being linked to the refreshed professional standards and empowering practitioners to be leaders of and for learning. Evaluation results over the last three years on CPD Manager reveal that, almost all practitioners (96%) agreed that a coaching approach was used by their PRD reviewer and all (100%) agreed that they reflected against the GTCS Standards in preparation for their PRD meeting. From the most recent local authority staff questionnaires, most respondents (83%) agreed they have regular leadership opportunities and almost all (97%) felt their professional learning enabled them to reflect on and improve practice.

Overall, it appears that education professionals are increasingly engaging in activities that we can ascribe to a distributive leadership stance in order to positively influence quality in the classroom and improve outcomes for learners. However as a Department, we need to ensure a consistency across all establishments to:

*“Cultivate a collaborative, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across schools, centres and beyond by developing the leadership skills of teachers.”*



Our next steps need to embed a culture where professional learning through collaborative inquiry are essential elements in the improvement journey and should directly impact upon the quality learning experiences of both practitioner and learner. Such activities are leadership opportunities and collectively we need to develop a consistent vocabulary for leadership where this is clearly communicated and understood. The practitioner inquiry group has made an excellent start in their definition of distributive leadership. To make this definition even more effective the group were asked to consider this definition in line with proposed next steps and agreed that going forward ERC should consider distributive leadership as:

*“Nurturing leadership and collegiality at all levels of an establishment to build capacity for improvement and change which positively impacts learner experiences.”*

This definition will be part of our next steps to ensure the opportunities being provided for and taken by education professionals at early stages of their careers are helping to develop the culture of collaboration and improvement that as a Department we aspire to.

## CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

How effectively are establishments creating a culture which delivers the ERC vision of distributive leadership as; ‘Nurturing leadership and collegiality at all levels of an establishment to build capacity for improvement and change which positively impacts learner experiences’?

How well do we create collaborative conditions for staff to critically engage with professional inquiry, academic research, policy sources and developments in pedagogy which positively impacts learner experiences?



## Review of 2019 Key Aims 3 and 4

**Key Aim 3:** *Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of senior leaders.*

**Key Aim 4:** *Create a sustainable pool of highly skilled and motivated leaders who are equipped to take the next steps into middle and senior leadership.*

Over recent years the recruitment and retention of quality middle leaders has been problematic contributing to the crisis in Head Teacher recruitment both in Scotland and internationally. There is a growing recognition, particularly in research literature, that middle leadership plays a pivotal role in connecting leadership with learning and thus in sustaining improvement in learning. However, if middle leaders are to be effective and successful in achieving positive results with learners and in fulfilling their career aspirations, they need opportunities to engage in professional learning which will improve their capacity to enhance their own and their staff team's pedagogical leadership while developing their own authentic leadership style (Flückiger et al 2015)<sup>11</sup>.

In 2019, our Leadership Strategy recognised the aforementioned concerns in middle leadership development. Key Aims 3 and 4 provide an ambition to build the capacity of leadership at all levels but particularly in the middle, with an expectation that in doing so we would '*grow our own*' school leaders for the future. To help inform a review of Key Aims 3 and 4 a group of middle leaders from the Primary and Early Years (EY) sectors (Appendix 2) and a group from the Secondary sector (Appendix 3) undertook two separate professional inquiries into the research question posed.

Data collected from these research groups included questionnaires with regard to practitioners' perceptions of leadership, as well as results from focus groups representing a cross-section of practitioners and specialists, with the aim of exploring participants' personal experiences in the context of leadership practice. The evidence collated from the Primary and EY middle leadership inquiry group is limited, as only a small proportion of schools responded to the requested consultation

(e.g. staff from only 22 of the 48 establishments responded, i.e. 24 primary schools, 13 of which have nursery classes and were treated separately for this purpose, 10 family centres and 1 school for children with additional support for learning needs.), such a limited sample prohibited the ability to fully reflect the views of all establishments. Across the 22 establishments that were represented, 112 responses were gathered in total. It is important to note that, in view of the limited response rate, it could also be argued that the sample was skewed as respondents were representative of areas of known good practice. This being said, whilst limited, the evidence from these groups suggests that ERC has made significant progress in building a more distributive and collaborative model of leadership in our establishments. The Secondary inquiry group chose not to employ the use of questionnaires.

Similar to the practitioners professional inquiry research group, this middle leadership inquiry group first looked at how the concept of distributive leadership is understood in schools and subsequently evidenced in practice. Qualitative data gathered through questionnaires provided insight into the perceptions of individuals, particularly around the understanding of what distributive leadership looks like, and this subsequently afforded the groups the opportunity to identify themes from responses. The inquiry groups then utilised these broad themes to elicit discussion within subsequent focus groups.

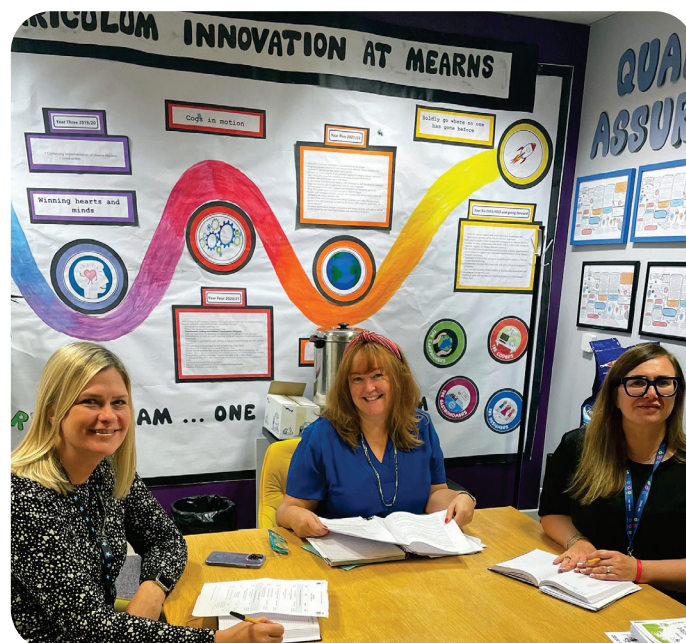
Evidence collated by the Primary and EY group revealed that most respondents (78%) felt that collegiate working was well established in their establishment and most respondents (81%) indicated that this collegiate working had made a positive impact on outcomes for learners. Participants in focus groups spoke enthusiastically about taking opportunities to

engage in professional inquiry and share findings within their establishments. This indicates that in the establishments that responded, Head Teachers and senior leaders are consciously creating the time, space and opportunity for practitioners to meet, plan, share and reflect. It was also evident from focus group discussions that an increasing number of Head Teachers are actively creating cultures of collegiality and greater capacity for leadership by inviting the participation of staff in self-evaluation and decision making, and in providing time for meaningful dialogue and discussion in relation to school improvement priorities. Surprisingly however, the results from the Primary and EY inquiry group show that only a majority of respondents (74%) felt empowered to make their own decisions to influence learner improvement. This is important as it indicates that whilst our Head Teachers are positively looking to provide wider leadership opportunities throughout their establishment, practitioners are less confident that genuine opportunities are being created for them to influence the priorities in their own classroom.

Similar to the practitioner leadership inquiry group, the middle leadership group reported tension in arriving at a shared understanding of the difference between distributed and distributive models. Within the responses gathered from the Primary and EY inquiry group, most (88%) respondents provided a variety of definitions of distributive and distributed leadership, with 12% indicating that they do not understand the difference between

the two terms. The inquiry group suggested this may be due to the “*fine dynamic balance between too much direction and too little direction*” (Fullan M., 2019, p. 19)<sup>12</sup>. However, it can be suggested that the number of practitioners not understanding the difference between the two terms may have been greater had evidence from a wider cross section of establishments and practitioners been available. The lack of understanding is ultimately down to the interpretation given by senior leaders in schools and perhaps the nature of leadership opportunities being provided. As highlighted by the practitioner inquiry groups this indicates the need for a common vocabulary and understanding moving forward.

The assertion that everyone is a leader and that middle-level leaders take a share of the leadership work in an establishment, is commonly accepted as an expression of evidence of distributive leadership in practice. However, as Gurr and Drysdale (2013)<sup>13</sup> suggest, distributive leadership may be turning teachers away from leadership work as they can find themselves placed in roles and given responsibilities for whole school activities that have expectations beyond their expertise, skill, knowledge and comfort levels. The evidence from academic research and our own research inquiry group discussions with practitioners reveal it is often these practices coined as ‘*leadership opportunities*’, for which practitioners report being unprepared and insufficiently supported, leading to a lack of trust and reluctance to move into formal leadership roles.



Going forward, we need to focus on distributive leadership as a supportive action to develop individuals' practice as opposed to the distribution of an enhanced role or formal title - or worse still the redistribution of a senior remit in order to *'lighten the load'*. Where distributive leadership was most effective, practitioners spoke enthusiastically of the importance of ethos within the school and behaviours by senior leaders which demonstrated that staff were not only trusted but valued. This in turn enabled individuals to have the confidence to step forward for leadership opportunities. The focus groups provided examples of such behaviours, including involvement in learning sets and whole school sharing of individual practitioner inquiry which both informed and improved learner experiences. The challenge for our renewed strategy will therefore be to create establishment based and departmental cultures that are conducive to supporting and nurturing the interactions between individuals and teams, and which subsequently result in increased confidence for innovation and real improvement to flourish in the classroom for every learner.

Our 2019 Leadership strategy recognised that for an improvement journey to be meaningful and sustained over the long term, *'improvements have to be integrated into the very fabric of the system pedagogy and establishing collaborative practices is a central component of improvement in the long term'* (Mourshed, Chijioke & Braber 2010 p11)<sup>14</sup>.

The Department has developed a number of initiatives to enhance such development opportunities across establishments. We have made progress in setting up a number of Research Hubs with a view to embedding the idea that professional inquiry is a stance rather than an action, or a habit rather than a time limited project. A number of practitioners spoke positively to all research groups about the impact of inquiry on their own leadership journey however practitioners were less able to speak convincingly, and demonstrate with tangible evidence, that involvement in research in this manner was having a positive impact on learner outcomes and thus whether the investment made by the Department

was making a sustainable difference. If an initiative, such as the Research Hubs, is to be successful there needs to be commitment and consistency across all establishments and clusters to embed an inquiring stance into everyday CLPL activity. In addition, we need to ensure that impact in the classroom is the consistent goal. Collectively we therefore need to ensure that our process of inquiry consistently includes an evaluation of impact. Glowing but unsubstantiated accounts of impact such as *'the professional inquiry work had impact because practitioners reported positive changes in the classroom'*, show very little evidence of the impact upon learner outcomes. Going forward an evidence based evaluation of impact of professional inquiry and distributive leadership initiatives will be undertaken in appropriate Departmental reviews.

This should ultimately lead to every cluster becoming a community of consistent and sustainable professional learning. Such an ambition will enable practitioners to engage in collaborative inquiry and improve learning experiences and outcomes, within and then beyond their own establishments (DuFour, 2009)<sup>15</sup>. Our renewed leadership strategy will support establishments to develop and sustain these traits of shared values and vision, a collaborative inquiring culture, a focus on examining outcomes to improve student learning, supportive and shared leadership and shared personal practice (Chapman et al 2012)<sup>16</sup>.

Since 2019, an increasing number experiential professional learning opportunities have been provided for middle leaders. In the Secondary sector temporary Principal Teacher (PT) Development posts have been advertised across the local authority where previously these posts would have typically been advertised only in one school. Where expertise has been lacking within ERC establishments for advertised vacancies, the Department have widened the search to the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). This has led to increasing opportunities for practitioners to develop leadership capacity out with the *'comfort zone'* of their own setting while supporting the cross fertilisation of innovative practice and thinking.

In addition, there have been an increasing number of opportunities for practitioners showing leadership potential to take on secondments within the Education Department. These have included Education Development Officer in English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Diversity, Digital Schools; Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Literacy. More recently, Depute Head Teachers (DHTs) have been seconded on a part time basis to Quality Improvement (QI) Associate roles within the QI Team. Experience in the above posts have led to increased leadership capacity within the ERC system while in some cases supporting practitioners to be successfully recruited into permanent leadership roles.

Through the recently developed Primary and Cluster Collaborative Improvement Visit (CIV) models as well as the Maths and Numeracy Review conducted in partnership with ADES and Education Scotland, there are increasing opportunities for Head Teachers and DHTs to be involved in these self-evaluation opportunities. The role of identified senior leaders during these visits has developed to include greater responsibility for report writing and feedback, as well as involvement in lesson observations and focus groups.

Equally, PTs within the Secondary sector have been supported to take increasing ownership of Subject Groups which are chaired by PTs, rather than QI Officers. These groups now have an increased focus on sharing best practice and strategic development of learning and teaching and of the curriculum. Linked to these Subject Groups, PTs play a lead role in the programmes of Secondary CIVs. In evaluations conducted following the CIV programmes, it was pleasing to note that most PTs agreed that CIVs are developing a culture of collaboration within and across schools.

It was interesting to note that in the findings of our research inquiry groups, involvement in such activities were rarely recognised by staff as leadership opportunities and results from the Secondary research revealed, whilst most middle leaders agreed that CIVs build their professional knowledge and expertise, there is scope for a more coherent and structured approach to sharing practice via Subject Groups. This inquiry group also commented that following the Alternative

Certification Model, there have been increased opportunities for PTs and DHTs to lead moderation activity across the local authority. However, these opportunities have not always been taken and there is scope for middle and senior leaders to be more involved in driving this activity forward. Both middle leader research inquiry groups highlighted the West Partnership Improving Our Classroom (IOC) and Improving Our Department (IOD) programmes as providing excellent leadership opportunities for practitioners. These programmes provide DHTs and Faculty Heads with the opportunity to lead this whole school initiative while collaborating with colleagues from across the RIC, leading to tangible improvement in practice for staff. Evaluations on the impact on teachers of this CLPL revealed that of the 23 members of staff attending the IOC course 96% felt that their skills had improved and 96% felt they were more confident to change their classroom practice. In terms of impact on learners 95% of teachers saw an improved confidence in their learners and 96% could evidence an improvement in attainment.

As with the practitioner leadership inquiry group it was disappointing to see that this middle leadership inquiry group provided little evidence from respondents that the opportunities offered centrally by the Education Department were being viewed as leadership development opportunities.

Coupled with the opportunity for more formal and informal leadership experiences, our 2019 Strategy recognised the need to provide our middle leaders and aspiring middle leaders with relevant and meaningful professional learning as CLPL. There is still a predominant view amongst practitioners that professional learning is about the practitioner, rather than the learner (Harris, 2014)<sup>6</sup>. This is not to say that the practitioner isn't important (this is where the professional expertise resides), however our strategy recognised that the focus of professional learning for middle leaders is to *'develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of senior leaders'* which first and foremost means pedagogy, leadership of people and of change. However, our strategy also recognised that our middle leaders need support in beginning their leadership journey and identifying their values and thus their own authentic style.





Our focus over the last few years has been on developing a programme for aspiring senior leaders i.e. those already in middle leadership aspiring to DHT and headship. The aims of our aspiring leaders programme include: increasing leadership capacity; supporting a career journey towards headship; promoting reflection of professional and personal practice; and creating a knowledge base founded on professional reading and inquiry. During and following completion of the programme, evaluations demonstrated that all members (100%) of the first cohort (15 DHTs and PTs) felt they had increased levels of knowledge, ability and confidence relating to leadership capacity. Comments from participants included:

*“I felt that the programme was extremely useful. Not only did it help me to identify areas that I need to develop but it actually made me reflect on my strengths and gain confidence in my own ability as a leader.”*

*“A key learning point for me was understanding the importance of shared values within a school and how all staff need to understand and embrace the ‘why’ for change to be successful and sustained.”*

*“I really liked the reading and subsequent discussion on being an authentic leader, and this is something I am enjoying reflecting on about myself. It ties in well with reflecting on my ‘why?’ when I am making a decision, and the research makes me feel more confident in my decisions when I know they sit well with me.”*

*“My coach was often able to give independent insight into situations arising in my own context and often allowed me to reflect on critical incidents much more clearly.”*

From the outset the programme had a focus on reflection and learning from experiences that challenge the practice and values of participants. A learning journal was provided with the expectation that this would aid reflective practice and inform coaching sessions. A particular strength of the programme is the involvement of established Head Teachers as coaches and in leading seminars. Feedback from participants, and those involved in both coaching and the delivery of sessions will inform improvements in order to enhance the experiences of future cohorts.

A desktop search by Flückiger, Lovett & Dempster (2014)<sup>17</sup>, revealed that there are markedly more programs available for Head Teachers and those aspiring to headship, and far fewer examples are available for middle leaders or those aspiring to middle leadership. Indeed, what has traditionally been offered to middle leaders has more often than not had a focus on ‘stepping stones to senior leadership positions rather than a concentration on the exercise of middle leadership’ and its influence over quality in the classroom (Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014, p. 52)<sup>18</sup>. As a reflection of this and the comments from our aspiring leaders programme, we propose that our renewed Strategy considers the development of a middle leader induction programme. Such a middle leadership indication should provide opportunities to improve the capacity of middle leaders to enhance their own and thus their staff team’s pedagogical leadership, setting them up as leaders of learning in the first instance. Our induction will then focus on the skills required for middle leaders to inspire confidence and to be able to bring staff with them in their vision for improvement. These skills include engaging practitioners in collaborative practice and focused discussion about ways to innovate and improve; observing and modelling practice; providing timely feedback; encouraging deep reflection and critique of practice; coaching and mentoring to ensure professional learning is translated into meaningful practice; and understanding moderation, assessment and reporting procedures (Flückiger et al, 2015)<sup>11</sup>.

Above all our professional learning needs to have impact. Whilst stand-alone programmes and even masters level learning are important in developing knowledge and understanding, they rarely change practice. Although most respondents (78%) to the EY and Primary surveys stated they felt supported to *'critically engage with research, policy sources and current developments in learning and teaching'*, there was little if no mention of this learning having a positive impact in the classroom. In fact, one of the main requests in terms of next steps from the focus groups was a request for more CLPL. There needs to be an understanding that professional learning must focus on learners and the quality of learning experiences. We need to further involve our experienced DHTs and Head Teachers to act as coaches, to reach out and support colleagues in leadership roles, as feedback from within or beyond the establishment facilitates the transfer of theory and knowledge into improved practice (MacBeath 2006<sup>19</sup>; Robertson 2008<sup>20</sup>; Swaffield 2004<sup>21</sup>). This kind of support should not be seen as providing answers but rather as using a repertoire of tools to help those being coached to reach new understandings. In addition, we need to establish a reliable and robust format to evaluate the impact of our CLPL particularly masters level learning and professional inquiry in terms of quality teaching and learning.

The overall findings from each research inquiry group revealed that, whilst there are real improvements in line with the key aims of our leadership strategy across the Department, distributive leadership in itself doesn't guarantee better performance and it is not necessarily a panacea for success: much depends on the opportunities created, the nature of distributive practice, the support provided and the intentions of those creating the opportunities i.e. our Head Teachers and senior leaders. If distributive leadership is to make any real difference senior leaders in schools have a substantial and integral role to play in making it a positive and meaningful experience. We are still on a journey in the achievement of Key Aims 3 and 4 to keep us on track our initiatives and programmes need to have a strong focus on the importance of leaders taking knowledge gained in professional learning whether through formal leadership programmes, secondments, collaborative working groups etc, back into their establishments in ways that maximise the effects of increasing leadership capacity on practice (Bush, 2009<sup>22</sup>; OECD, 2008)<sup>23</sup>.

## CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

How well do leaders empower staff and take steps to develop leadership at all levels in order to improve overall capacity within the establishment?

How well do leadership teams within establishments create the conditions for staff to engage regularly in professional dialogue to develop collective understanding? For example, shared understanding of standards, pedagogy, assessment and strategies for raising attainment.

How well do middle leaders actively seek out and share good practice within and beyond their establishment and to what extent can they demonstrate improvement as a result?

## Review of 2019 Key Aims 5 and 6

**Key Aim 5:** *Empower and support newly appointed Head Teachers to develop their own authentic leadership in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.*

**Key Aim 6:** *Utilise the expertise and depth of experience of Head Teachers to inform policy and practice beyond their own schools/centres, throughout the local authority, regionally and nationally and ensure their expertise, knowledge and skills enable the stimulation and dissemination of best practice and innovation.*

The 2019 Leadership Strategy echoed Earley and Weindling's (2007)<sup>24</sup> research into the stages of headship in identifying how the first five years of headship are critical in forming leadership identity as newly appointed Head Teachers experience a number of common difficulties and pressures. Walker & Qian's (2006, p297)<sup>25</sup> image of newly appointed Head Teachers '*balancing atop a greasy pole*' where they observe that the '*rigors involved in the climb not only continue but actually accentuate during the first few years of [headship]*' exemplifies the difference between expectation and stark reality of the job.

During this early headship period, Stevenson (2006)<sup>26</sup> indicates how the values of the Head Teacher may face conflict as they seek to juggle the demands of their new post whilst remaining accountable for the performance of their school. Such potential conflict is an example of an early critical incident, the handling of which may subsequently impact on the development of a Head Teacher's professional and personal identity as a leader and how their future headship may subsequently unfold. In fact, such incidents are a crucial stage in the identification and further development of an authentic style of leadership for Head Teachers. Fidler and Atton (2004, p168)<sup>27</sup> refer to these incidents as;

*"trigger points which ...test the ability of the head teacher to see beyond the presenting problem to potentially deeper issues and to respond appropriately. This response will shape future decisions and will have an important effect on other stakeholder's attitudes to the head".*

In keeping with the notion of authentic leadership Aim 5 of our Strategy emphasised that newly appointed Head Teachers should be appropriately

supported in coming to understand that such experiences are an essential and an inevitable part of headship and not necessarily attributable to any failure on the part of their leadership. Linked to these possible feelings of '*imposter syndrome*' the emotional demands of the job are often cited as one of the greatest challenges facing new Head Teachers during their early period of professional and organisational socialisation, particularly for Head Teachers moving into a new education authority. Reeves et al. (1997)<sup>28</sup> refer to this as '*isolation and overload.*'

In recognising these concerns, Aim 5 of our Leadership Strategy sought to try to address some of these issues for early headship. As well as utilising evaluation reports and a small survey, a focus group of ERC Head Teachers (in post 5 years and under) were brought together to explore the success or otherwise of the Department's endeavours in achieving Aim 5. The group emphasised the pressures experienced in the early years of headship with one Head Teacher stating;

*"The challenges that HTs face can be overwhelming and isolating."*

In redesigning our new Head Teacher Induction programme it was important to incorporate an emphasis on understanding these early pressures to headship. Fully utilising the lived experience of our senior leaders throughout the programme was one means of doing this. Strategic leadership, in a rapidly changing policy context, is a key focus of the new programme. An underpinning concern in programme design was to ensure that the sessions provided would equip our newly appointed Head Teachers with the skills and confidence to respond to this context. The Head Teacher induction

programme incorporates a range of both operational and strategic sessions led by established Head Teachers, Quality Improvement Officers and senior education staff. Newly appointed Head Teachers are offered a personal coach for the duration of these formative years. The coaching sessions are designed to enable participants to translate the learning into practice while providing scope and space within the programme to reflect critically on and process formative, and often challenging, leadership learning experiences.

All participants in the focus group reviewing the induction programme expressed how, within the early years of headship, they experienced time when they felt ‘not ready’ or ‘not good enough’ for the job of Head Teacher. To address those natural feelings of ‘imposter syndrome’, it was important to ensure our induction programme incorporated sessions that would allow for robust discussion around preparation for a role in which there are high degrees of unpredictability. There is no textbook response to critical incidents faced by Head Teachers, invariably they must act from policy guidelines or their value base and their tacit knowledge. In such cases, the knowledge imparted by our senior leaders based on what they have learned from the handling of previous unpredictable situations was invaluable. An important message as a golden thread throughout the programme is that our new Head Teachers must recognise that they are operating in what Schön (1987, p6)<sup>29</sup> describes as ‘indeterminate zones of practice’ (IZP) which escape technical rationality or solution, but which are pertinent to professional practice. Thus, our programme aims to prepare our newly appointed Head Teachers for such indeterminate zones of practice. In Vygotskian (1978)<sup>30</sup> terms, we have given consideration as to what scaffolding can be put in place to prepare Head Teachers for, and support them through, these challenging times. In simple terms ‘openly discussing the perplexing aspects of headship helps demystify them by signalling they are a ‘normal’ part of growth and development in headship and not an indication of failure’ (Purdie, 2014, p149)<sup>31</sup>. This was recognised and appreciated by all Head Teachers with 100% responding that the programme supported them to become more authentic in their leadership.

*“The East Renfrewshire Head Teacher Induction Programme created a focussed learning experience for me as a new Head Teacher. It helped to develop my skills in both strategic and operational leadership, in a safe and supportive environment. Its focus on leadership within East Renfrewshire Council specifically meant that my leadership was fostered in line with East Renfrewshire Council’s Vision, Values and Aims, and allowed us all to challenge ourselves and our leadership style.”*

(Head Teacher, HT Survey.)

Research by the Hay Group (2008)<sup>32</sup> notes the differences between established leaders who demonstrate leadership maturity in such matters as political awareness, indirect influencing, alliance-building skills and long-term thinking and planning, and emergent leaders who often do not yet possess such qualities and skills. In designing our induction programme we asked the question: ‘how can leadership maturity be accelerated as well as leadership and management skills developed?’ (Earley & Jones 2010, p87)<sup>33</sup>. Collins (2008)<sup>34</sup> contends that people do not only learn from experience, but also their reflection on that experience. Providing opportunities for such reflection is a key issue in Head Teacher development and is fundamental to our induction programme. Headship ‘in the swamp’ is openly discussed throughout our programme, as, according to Wright (2009, p265)<sup>35</sup>, ‘In the swamp, everyday experiences are rich sources of learning that may be provoked by tension, chaos, struggle, uncertainty, conflict and dilemma.’ Open discussion of such difficult issues serves the purpose of making new Head Teachers aware of the fact that they are not alone, an aspect of the programme openly appreciated by focus group participants;

*“Having the protected time to work alongside colleagues at a similar stage in our Headship journeys was invaluable. Networking and working collaboratively in a ‘Safe Space’ environment is incredibly important and helps you realise you are not the only one feeling a certain way.”*

*“ERC should continue to offer the robust and tailored support that we have been lucky enough to experience. When speaking with colleagues across other LAs, it is clear we receive a huge amount of support.”*

The programme also appreciates that at induction stage Head Teachers may not yet be aware of their individual leadership development needs. As such, in house coaches appointed have been experienced and practicing Head Teachers. Head Teachers reported particularly valuing the support provided by ERCs comprehensive coaching provision which has, on occasion, been complimented by external independent coaching support;

*“Coaching provided Head Teachers with the opportunity to establish trusting relationships to effectively reflect on their leadership and management journey thus far.”*

*“The Coaching Programme provided the support for more informal conversations and questions, to develop my skills and abilities from experienced colleagues.”*

Feedback would also indicate that further development of coaching strategies, specifically the appointment of Head Teacher coaches, would be highly beneficial to all Head Teachers and ERC senior leaders, as both participants (coach and coachee) develop from the experience. All (100%) of focus group participants and survey respondents, expressed a desire for further coaching and associated CLPL, with some giving a specific request to develop their ability to support staff wellbeing.

It is worth noting that the increasing number of newly appointed Head Teachers who have participated successfully in the *Into Headship* programme are, alongside our *Aspiring Leaders* and *Head Teacher Induction* programmes, making a significant contribution to the development of leadership capacity across the system.

It is clear from the results of our review of Aim 5 that new Head Teachers require particular types of support in order to establish themselves and function as effective leaders in their establishments. Coaching, and induction into the Department culture helps new Head Teachers to learn *‘the way we do things in ERC’*. However our Head Teacher induction programme also provides opportunities for a deeper examination of aspects of what it

means to be a Head Teacher with coaching and safe space group discussions playing a vital role in this aspect of headship development. The evidence would suggest that in line with the Aim 5 of the leadership strategy the support provided for new Head Teachers ensures they do more than just survive this induction period but instead become skilled leaders through improved confidence and competence.

This leads into the consideration of Aim 6 with regard to our established Head Teachers. Focus group discussions were used to capture the thoughts of our experienced leaders in terms of the Departments progress in supporting them to expand their leadership experience beyond the confines of their own establishment, cluster and local authority. The expectations in Aim 6 are complex and could be seen as unattainable given the present competing demands on Head Teachers and the ever changing policy context within which they need to be seen to be both managing and achieving competing priorities. Various policy initiatives from the Scottish Government reflect a shift towards a desire for more localised (establishment level) decision making in the context of an ambitious national vision for improved outcomes for all children and young people. These expectations have coincided with unprecedented fiscal challenges for all in education. The challenge for the Department and for Head Teachers, is how to develop the leadership capacity of their staff teams enabling establishments to be successful in achieving their ambitions for every learner.



The ask of our senior leaders within our 2019 Leadership Strategy was for them to consider a move towards a system based stance both in their own leadership and in the leadership development of others. Fullan (2004, p9)<sup>36</sup> explains that for improvement to happen across the system for every learner:

*“A new kind of leadership is necessary to break through the status quo ... it will take powerful proactive forces to change the existing system (to change context). This can be done directly and indirectly through systems thinking in action. These new theoreticians are leaders who work directly in their own schools ... and participate in the bigger picture. To change organisations and systems will require leaders to get experience in linking to other parts of the system. These leaders in turn must help other leaders with similar characteristics.”*

As our leadership strategy review has revealed our Head Teachers have embraced this approach and are actively moving away from the paradigm of the ‘hero leader’ to a more selfless, altruistic system leadership. It is clear that many of our Head Teachers are developing staff at all levels of the system to understand and accept that they have a responsibility for change and can affect the life chances of learners and therefore are themselves ‘the system’. Staff are beginning to comprehend that individually they have a responsibility to ‘interact with, learn from, contribute to and be a living member of the system as it evolves’ (Fullan, 2021, p34)<sup>37</sup>.

Senior leaders have been instrumental in the provision of coaching for our Head Teacher Induction programme and for our Aspiring Leaders programme. In addition, they have shared their experience and knowledge in the delivery of aspects of these programmes. Their contextual knowledge at local authority level was significant in shaping the content of specific sections of these programmes. Head Teachers have been able to accurately portray the current, real life experiences of Head Teachers in establishments within the context of rapidly occurring change.

In addition to the delivery of key sessions, Head Teachers have been involved in scaffolding and processing participants’ reflective experiences

and responses during reflective group discussion sessions. Feedback from participants on both the Head Teacher Induction programme and the Aspiring Leaders programme indicates that this is an important element in their leadership development. It has also been satisfying for the Head Teachers involved to follow the growth and development of participants, particularly as they move into senior leadership posts. The relationships built during the in-course learning have continued as an available source of support for recently appointed Head Teachers and aspiring leaders, providing a two way benefit. The feedback from both participants on each programme and the established Head Teachers involved in delivery is that the model appears to be effective in translating theory into practice.

Established Head Teachers and Heads of Establishment have taken opportunities to contribute to the wider work of the Education Department with activities such as leading the development of policy in conjunction with the LNCT e.g. curriculum, learning and teaching, unacceptable actions, recruitment and have acted as key contributors to the shaping of strategy such as the Review of the Leadership Strategy 2019. Head Teachers have taken over the leadership of forums such as the Primary & Early Years Head Teacher Forum and the CfE Secondary Head Teacher Forum, in order to shape the direction of these meetings to better meet their needs and to share best practice more effectively. Through the various CIV models, there are increasing opportunities for leaders to take on greater responsibility for shaping and influencing improvement across establishments in ERC. It is also notable that an increasing number of leaders are opening their doors to share their establishment’s professional learning opportunities with colleagues from across the Department such as Learning and Teaching conference events; active involvement in piloting initiatives through the Regional Improvement Collaborative e.g. *Improving our Classroom*, as well as senior leaders being asked to speak at national events to showcase the work undertaken in the local authority through Education Scotland.

We are also fortunate to be able to draw on the expertise and experience of an increasing number of Head Teachers (11) who, following their achievement

of the Standard for Headship, have gone on to participate in the *In Headship* and *Excellence in Headship* programmes. In terms of the wider system our Head Teachers have been encouraged to engage in activities through the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative, including Learning sets and Hexagon Coaching with 18 of our Head Teachers having completed this invaluable CLPL. Head Teachers and members of our Quality Improvement Team (16 in total) have also participated in *Evolving Systems Thinking* and *Making Sense of Systems Leadership* programmes. ERC also have an increasing number of Head Teachers and members of the Quality Improvement Team who fulfil the role of Associate Assessor for Education Scotland and who are able to share their learning from these roles to further enhance the level of knowledge across the system. One participant in the *Making Sense of Systems Leadership* programme commented:

*“Participation has helped to develop my understanding of what highly effective and impactful system leaders do and the key attributes they hold. I have been able to take this back into the workplace and implement many of the initiatives relevant to my leadership development.”*

It is important to note that both the academic literature review and the results of the research inquiry groups highlighted the importance of our

established Head Teachers in setting the tone for change and embedding the right culture and ethos. Harris (2014, p66)<sup>6</sup> describes Head Teachers as *‘the gatekeepers of change and they can be a help or hindrance in securing new ways of working’* and in supporting a practitioner’s career progression. The research evidence shows that the most effective leaders embrace opportunities for innovation and change, they balance pressure and support for their teams and they empower practitioners to perform whilst holding them accountable for performance (Sahlberg 2011)<sup>38</sup>. Head Teachers therefore are key in creating the conditions for effective distributive leadership to occur. If Head Teachers create the opportunity for staff to lead by inviting their participation in decision making and by providing the time for dialogue and discussion, greater capacity for leadership will be created. Distributive leadership will therefore be more likely viewed by practitioners as genuine and will therefore be sustained. If distributive leadership is viewed as inauthentic or used as a subtle mechanism to push workload downwards, it will be destined to fail.

*“Creating organisations where relationships matter and where everyone’s contribution is valued is what characterises effective leadership. The most effective leaders understand that people are not just their best assets. They are their only assets.”* (Harris, 2014, p69)<sup>6</sup>

## CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

To what extent are our strategies for change impacting positively on staff and improving outcomes for all learners? How is this evidenced for impact?

How well do Head Teachers and Heads of Establishment create conditions to support creativity, innovation and inquiry where staff feel confident to initiate well-informed change and are committed to collective responsibility in the process of improvement?

## Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Indicator	Target (by 2020-21)	Achieved (2017-23)
1. Number of staff taking Masters level Learning	150	290
2. Number of Staff with Masters Degrees	30	95
3. Number of staff undertaking Professional Inquiry (Based on knowledge of whole school approaches, probationer programmes and feedback from Head Teachers)	400	60%
4. Number of Staff with Into Headship Qualification	25	27
5. Number of staff engaged in the Aspiring Leaders Programme	10	28
6. Number of Staff engaged in Excellence in Headship Programme	10	11
7. Percentage of positive results on CLPL evaluations	100%	91%
8. Percentage of positive results from evaluations of probationer induction programme. * Probationers surveyed who agreed that CLPL provided by the local authority has developed professional skills and abilities. ** Probationers surveyed who agreed they have developed as an enquiring professional through completion of a professional inquiry.	100%*	100%* 93%**
9. Number of ERC schools achieving good or better in school inspections for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning, teaching and assessment;</li> <li>• Raising attainment and achievement;</li> <li>• Leadership of change.</li> </ul>	100% 100% 100%	8/8 100% 8/8 100% 5/5 100%
10. Number of teachers who have had their Professional learning confirmed through Professional Update and subsequently recorded by the GTCS	100%	100%
11. Number of staff engaged in leadership programmes through the West Partnership.	No data	145
12. Number of staff engaged in systems level leadership programmes.	No data	16



## Next Steps and Revised Key Aims

The overall findings from each research inquiry group reveal that, whilst there are real improvements in line with the key aims of our 2019 strategy, distributive leadership in itself doesn't guarantee better performance and it is not necessarily a panacea for success: much depends on the opportunities created, the nature of distributive practice, the support provided and the intentions of those creating the opportunities i.e. our Head Teachers, Heads of Establishment and senior leaders. If distributive leadership is to make any real difference senior leaders in schools have a substantial and integral role to play in making it a positive and meaningful experience. The key aims as set out in our 2019 strategy remain relevant in a number of key areas, but where required, have been refreshed to ensure they are now appropriate to the context of the Departments leadership aspirations for all staff. These refreshed Key Aims will be considered within a new and evolving context of national and local policy when informing our action planning and target setting.

### REVISED KEY AIMS

1. Effectively develop resilient and reflective practitioners who consistently deliver high quality learning experiences within and beyond their own setting by engaging individually and collaboratively in contemporary, meaningful and inspiring professional learning.
2. Cultivate an informed, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across all settings by utilising disciplined collaboration which not only develops and enriches the leadership skills of practitioners but provides a positive impact on outcomes for all learners.
3. Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of highly effective leaders, as well as the confidence to begin to explore their own authentic style of leadership.
4. Empower and support all newly appointed Heads of Establishment and Senior Leaders to develop their own authentic leadership in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.
5. Utilise the expertise and depth of experience of established Senior Leaders to inform policy and practice beyond their own settings locally, regionally and nationally to unite in a single focus on collaborative approaches to systemic change aimed at improving the outcomes for all learners.

To achieve the above we will engage in the actions as set out in the refreshed strategy.

## Appendix 1

### Teacher Leadership Inquiry

#### Question

Is distributive leadership being effectively utilised to develop capacity and collegiality in the system which positively influences quality in the classroom and helps deliver excellent experiences for all?

#### Rationale

A cross-sector working group of teachers were requested to design and conduct an inquiry to review East Renfrewshire Council Education Department's Leadership Strategy and use the project's findings to inform a new, refreshed edition of the policy. The group specifically engaged with research and reading on the concept of distributive leadership, and the potential advantages and challenges this approach can bring to education settings.

Understood as encouraging and mobilising leadership expertise at all levels of a school, from the classroom teacher to the senior leader, distributive leadership moves the focus of leadership from solely "top-down" governance to an approach where staff are more empowered, with responsibility and leadership being layered throughout all levels of a school (Fullan & Kirtman 2019, p.11). In the research, adopting a distributive leadership model was identified as being a powerful strategy for long-term improvement in terms of pupil attainment and achievement (Harris 2014, p.14). Additionally, rooted in a clear model of collegiality where collaboration is pervasive, a key tenant of coherent school leadership (Fullan & Kirtman, p.47), aspects of distributive leadership are found to lead to shared decision-making in schools, with an increased culture of trust and increased staff ownership. This was subsequently found to lead to increased individual and collective capacity and a focus on "team over self" (ibid., p.5). Furthermore, due to the range of colleagues involved in a distributive model, settings can develop a greater range of solutions and interventions which meet the needs of pupils and staff (Harris, p.38).

However, where the literature points to the sizable potential for distributive leadership, potential barriers to it being beneficial were also evident. Indeed, the implementation of a distributive model without an adequate implementation strategy can be debilitating towards the goals of distributive leadership (Harris, p.27). In addition, if distributive leadership is perceived as adding to teacher workload, resistance and failure is more likely (ibid., p.66). Furthermore, there is a risk that distributive leadership can incorrectly be translated in practice into "distributed" leadership, whereby true collaboration is replaced with cooperation and compliance (ibid., p.31).

Nevertheless, despite its potential difficulties, the distributive model, when correctly implemented, appeals as professionals at all levels face the increasingly complex landscape of education as, as posited by Fullan, 'the more complex the problem, the more that people with the problem must be part and parcel of the solution' (2019, p.1).

Following on from discussion of the core literature and with a view to evaluating the use of distributive leadership across the authority, the working group established an agreed definition of distributive leadership as "nurturing leadership at all levels of an organisation to build capacity for improvement and change", using this definition to guide all aspects of the ensuing intervention.

## Methodology

**Research Design:** The inquiry utilised a mixed-methods research design to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the current use of distributive leadership within East Renfrewshire education establishments.

**Participants:** The participants in this study were unpromoted staff from various early years, primary, and secondary settings in East Renfrewshire. This diverse representation ensured a comprehensive perspective on distributive leadership across different educational contexts.

**Data Collection:** The data collection process involved two primary methods: an anonymous questionnaire and follow-up 1 to 1 telephone interviews.

*Questionnaire:* A Google Form questionnaire was created by the group to gather data and feedback from teaching and education staff. The questionnaire consisted of a series of Likert scale questions and open-ended questions designed to assess participants' perceptions and experiences related to distributive leadership. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to nurseries, primary schools, and secondary schools. Participants were asked to rate their responses on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represented "Strongly Agree" and 4 represented "Strongly Disagree." 139 people responded to the survey. Of the 139, 21 were in permanent promoted posts and so their responses were discounted from the data analysis. This left 118 respondents.

*Follow-Up Telephone Interviews:* In addition to the questionnaire, the group conducted follow-up telephone interviews with a group of participants who had indicated in their questionnaire response that they were willing to be interviewed. These interviews were semi-structured and aimed to delve deeper into participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to distributive leadership. The interviews focused on topics such as practices reflecting distributive leadership, non-reflective practices, leadership capacity, and support needed for improvement. A total of 10 participants were selected for the telephone interviews based on their willingness to provide additional feedback during the questionnaire.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed by calculating the average scores for each question and determining the percentage breakdown of responses for each Likert scale option. The averages were used to identify patterns and trends in the participants' perceptions of distributive leadership. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the telephone interviews were thematically analysed to identify common themes, perspectives, and insights. Key themes from the written responses were coded and the frequency of each theme was determined.

An initial analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire was done with further areas for clarification identified in order to answer the initial research question. The initial areas identified were:

- Further information on what respondents understand by the term 'distributive leadership' and clarification of what practices reflect this and which do not.
- What do respondents think it means to show leadership capacity? What do they consider 'being a leader' to mean within their setting?
- What kind of support would respondents need to develop the skills and resources to lead improvement?

It was agreed that this information would be gathered through structured interviews which were then undertaken. Post interviews, the team met again to code the interview transcripts and notes for clear themes.

**Ethical Considerations:** Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Participation in the questionnaire and follow-up interviews was voluntary, and participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data were securely stored and used only for the purposes of the inquiry.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire responses and follow-up interviews, the group aimed to gather a comprehensive understanding of the current use of distributive leadership within East Renfrewshire's education department. The methodology ensured inclusivity and allowed for both quantitative and qualitative insights to inform the findings and subsequent recommendations.

## Evaluation and Impact

### Analysis of initial survey data (See Appendix 1)

The initial survey was comprised of 10 statements with an agreement scale response and then an open written response to the question 'Do you feel there are any barriers to you taking on leadership roles? Please detail below'. The analysis was done on overall responses to the statements, a comparison of part time and full time members of staff and an analysis of barriers to participation.

### Key themes across responses

Analysis of the survey data revealed that most (75% - 90%) respondents agreed with five of the ten statements, and a majority (51% - 74%) of respondents agreed with descriptions of distributive leadership practices being relevant to their setting. The statements that had most respondents agree included feeling empowered to make improvements within settings, self-initiated collaborative working and access to relevant data and impactful CLPL as methods to achieve this. The statements with a majority of respondents agreeing included statements that explicitly referenced 'leadership' and described more formal or organised collaboration within and across settings.

Most respondents (81%) collaborate regularly with colleagues to enhance the quality of learning experiences they provide, while only a majority (73%) of respondents feel like their setting has a culture of collegiality and uses collaborative planning effectively to promote excellent practice. This would suggest that collaboration for improvement is something that happens in a self-initiated way in some settings. This reflects the model of distributive leadership outlined by Fullan & Kirtman (2019) but the building of collaborative planning could also be an area for whole school improvement in future that could utilise practitioners existing skills sets.

These results would suggest that many respondents are engaging in activities that Harris (2014) would ascribe to distributive leadership in order to positively influence quality in the classroom and improve outcomes for learners: collaborating, accessing professional learning and being empowered to make changes. However, despite high agreement rates within these skills, 'I feel like a leader within my setting' had the lowest agreement rate of all the statements (64%), suggesting that not all respondents explicitly connect these activities with leadership.

The statement with the second lowest agreement rate (66%) was 'I have had the opportunity to work collaboratively across the authority to improve outcomes for learners'. This theme also came across in the responses to the structured interviews.

### Part time and full time comparison

The average score for responses was very similar across part time and full time staff. There were many areas with similar data being gathered from both groups: collaboration, average scores of responses, time as a barrier. Overall, the proportion of full time respondents that answered with only 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' was 73%. However, the proportion of part time respondents that answered with only 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' was 50%, suggesting that part time staff experience more barriers in certain aspects of distributive leadership. Additionally, there was a difference in feeling like a leader between part time and full time staff, with the part time staff less likely to feel like a leader in their setting (an average of 2.19 for full time staff and 2.55 for part time staff). This was noted as an area for possible further research or improvement.

### Barriers to leadership

The responses to the open question regarding barriers were coded and grouped into 10 themes. The number of instances of these themes arising were then counted across all responses. If a barrier was listed more than once in a single response, it was only counted as one instance of this barrier being identified.

The barrier most frequently cited was 'Time', with 'Lack of Support', 'Resources (including budgets and CLPL)' and 'Workload' as the three most frequent after that. Some of the responses mentioned that these barriers seem 'endemic to teaching' and it was discussed during our analysis that time, resources and workload are structural challenges that may be beyond the scope of a leadership strategy to address. 'Lack of Support' could be an area for development in the future strategy.

### Analysis of structured interview responses (See Appendix 2)

The group met to feedback from individually conducted interviews. While transcripts and notes were read out, main themes were identified from each question using emergent coding.

Question 1 - A strong culture of collegiality and frequent opportunities to share and lead good practice were identified in most follow up interviews as features of distributive leadership observable in settings.

Question 2 - Top-down allocation of leadership roles from promoted members of staff (distributed rather than distributive models) was mentioned by interviewees as a practice that occurs in contrast to distributive leadership styles.

Question 3(a) - Managing learning within classrooms, supporting pupils and sharing practice with staff were the leadership capacity indicators that chimed with distributive leadership styles.

Question 3(b) - Many respondents also described formal or named roles (such as Maths Champion or STEM Ambassador) as a main way they had shown leadership capacity.

Question 4 - Interviewees identified 'Being a leader' to mean communicating clearly, being a role model, mentoring, improving outcomes and providing excellent experiences for learners.

Question 5 - The support required to develop the skills and resources to lead improvement were recognition for leadership roles, support and clear pathways for progress.

These themes would suggest that most interviewees recognise the features of distributive leadership both in their settings through identifying common practices and also in themselves in how they show leadership capacity. The responses to Q3b suggest that there is still some association with specific named roles - leadership being something you have not something you do - that may act as a barrier to others taking on responsibility for improvement.

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### Next Steps

- Increase opportunities to visit and collaborate with colleagues in other settings.
- Promote a more consistent culture across settings where all staff feel valued, empowered and recognised for their leadership contributions.
- Promote greater understanding of distributive leadership.
- Consider further surveys with greater reach.

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## Appendix 2

### Primary Middle Leadership Inquiry

#### Question

Is distributive leadership being effectively utilised to develop capacity and collegiality in the system which positively influences quality in the classroom and helps deliver excellent experiences for all?

In order to evaluate how distributive leadership is enacted in schools, it is important to establish how this concept is understood in theory and subsequently evidenced in practice.

The purpose of this inquiry is to determine existing leadership practice, with a particular focus on leadership at all levels. Findings from this project will inform the revision of the current ERC leadership strategy and help to identify appropriate amendments and next steps.

Within ERC there are 24 primary schools, 13 of which have nursery classes, 10 family centres and 1 school for children with additional support for learning needs.

Data collection included the following components:

- A. An online questionnaire to obtain information regarding practitioners' perceptions of leadership theory and practice
- B. Reflective analysis to identify key themes to further explore within practitioner focus groups
- C. A series of three focus groups to represent a cross-section of teachers and specialists discussing participants' personal experiences in the context of leadership practice

To support the development of the inquiry, it was pertinent to engage with relevant research and literature. In line with the view that "the individual is [...] not the unit of analysis in the study of leadership, but rather practice or activity is viewed as being the appropriate unit of analysis (Spillane et al., 2001), we felt it important to gather views both individually and within small groups. In this instance leadership is concerned with inter-dependency rather than dependency and embraces a variety of leaders in diverse roles who share leadership responsibility (Harris, 2005b).

Whilst a shift away from traditional hierarchical models towards a more distributive, collaborative model seems favourable (Spillane, 2006; OECD, 2014; Fullan, 2016), it is reasonable to suggest there is still progress to be made in relation to widespread application and evidence of positive impact.

#### Rationale for Data Collection

The rationale for collecting data using both questionnaires and focus groups was to ensure balance between qualitative and quantitative information from practitioners in various roles within establishments from across the authority. The benefit of using an online questionnaire offered the respondents the flexibility to answer questions at their leisure. Respondents comprised of Head of Centres, Depute Head Teachers, Depute Head of Centres, Principal Teachers, Teachers, Senior Child Development Officers, Child development Officers, Pupil Support Assistants and Early Years Play workers. A separate questionnaire was sent to all Primary Head Teachers. There was a degree of anonymity within the questionnaire allowing for honest responses. Qualitative data gathered through questionnaires provided insights into the perceptions of individuals and afforded us the opportunity to identify themes from responses within the same establishment. We then used these broad themes to create further questions to explore within the subsequent focus groups.

Two of the focus groups were comprised of members of staff from the same establishment. This was due to high response rates from the identified establishments in comparison to the other establishments represented. Within the focus groups in the same establishments, various roles were represented from those consulted in the questionnaires (Table E). One focus group contained practitioners from four different establishments.

### Limitations of Data Gathering

The requirement to stipulate role and establishment meant that respondents in a leadership position could be identified. This may have affected openness within responses. Three of the wider reaching (multi-establishment) focus groups were planned but unfortunately two of these groups were unable to go ahead due to planned industrial action. Other constraints included timing: the questionnaire corresponded with the consultation surrounding the National Discussion on Scotland's Education, this may have inhibited the uptake of responses to the initial questionnaire and attendance at focus groups. Another potential limitation to data gathering was the omission of other staff members views, such as; facilities management, admin staff and education partners. The questionnaire required an extension of the response timeline due to a limited uptake of 21 responses; we re-sent the questionnaire and the response rate increased to 112, across the authority.

### \*other staff

#### Questionnaires

#### A. An online questionnaire to obtain information regarding practitioners' perceptions of leadership theory and practice

22 out of 48 establishments were represented through questionnaire responses (roles listed below). Across the 22 establishments that were represented, 112 responses were gathered in total.

<b>Depute Head Teachers</b>	5%
<b>Principal Teachers</b>	10%
<b>Class Teachers</b>	81%
<b>Child Development Officers</b>	3%
<b>Pupil Support Assistants</b>	1%

Prior to the creation of questionnaire content, each member of the inquiry team read the following three texts (alongside other relevant materials):

1. Distributed Leadership Matters: Perspectives, Practicalities and Potential (Harris, A., 2014)
2. Coherent School Leadership: Forging Clarity from Complexity (Fullan, M. and Kirtman, L., 2019)
3. Nuance: Why Some Leaders Succeed and Others Fail (Fullan, M., 2019)

**Table A**

	<b>Key Theme</b>	<b>HGIOS4?</b>
<b>Theme 1</b>	Leadership	1.4 Leadership and Management of Staff
<b>Theme 2</b>	Culture	1.3 Leadership of Change
<b>Theme 3</b>	Shared Purpose and Vision	1.3 Leadership of Change
<b>Theme 4</b>	Autonomy	1.3 Leadership of Change
<b>Theme 5</b>	Collegiality/Connected Autonomy	1.1 Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement
<b>Theme 6</b>	Professional Development	1.2 Leadership of Change
<b>Theme 7</b>	Capacity Building/Impact	1.1 Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement
<b>Theme 8</b>	Moving Forward/Next Steps	1.2 Leadership of Learning



The questionnaire contained eleven questions in total. Five of these were quantitative in nature with the remaining six allowing respondents the freedom to provide supporting detail.

### Quantitative Questions

Questions 3-7 listed below involved respondents rating each statement from 1-6 (6 being the most positive response). As is shown in Table B, responses were very positive overall. Whilst Question 6 yielded the highest average response, there is not much of a differential between the total values. Question 5, however, resulted in the highest rating when combining values 5 and 6, suggesting there is evidence of collegiate working having a positive impact on outcomes for learners. It is interesting to note that Question 7, centred on a sense of empowerment and the opportunity to be involved in decision-making scored the lowest value. This suggests that this may be worthy of further focus within establishments in concordance with the views of Fullan, M. & Kirtman, L. (2019, p. 14) who state, “If we want people to engage and commit to the goals of a district, they need to be part of the decision-making process and have genuine opportunities to lead.” Given the closeness of scores, however, we did not place statistical value on these responses.

**Table B – Breakdown of Questionnaire Responses (3-7)**

	Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
<b>Q3</b>	In my school or establishment, I have meaningful opportunities to develop relationships through working collegiately	1%	0%	4%	18%	29%	49%	<b>5.21</b>
<b>Q4</b>	Collegiality is well-developed within my school or establishment to build capacity for improvement and change	0%	2%	3%	18%	37%	41%	<b>5.13</b>
<b>Q5</b>	The collegiate opportunities I have engaged with have had a positive impact on outcomes for learners	1%	2%	2%	15%	36%	45%	<b>5.17</b>
<b>Q6</b>	I feel supported to critically engage with research, policy sources and current developments in learning and teaching	2%	3%	1%	16%	21%	57%	<b>5.24</b>
<b>Q7</b>	I feel empowered and supported to engage in the decision-making process to improve learner outcomes and provide excellent experiences for all	3%	3%	4%	18%	21%	53%	<b>5.09</b>

### Qualitative Questions

Prior to gathering views on leadership practice, we felt it appropriate to establish a baseline understanding of the concept of distributive leadership (particularly given the challenges in definition highlighted in literature). There appears to be a particular tension in arriving at a shared understanding of the difference between distributed and distributive models. For this reason, each respondent was asked to differentiate between these two concepts, the results of which led to the identification of key themes. Within the responses gathered, 88% of respondents provided a variety of definitions which are categorised in Table C below. 12% indicated that they do not understand the difference between the two terms. A breakdown of responses is provided in Appendix 1 (a shortened list removing duplicated phrases). Perhaps this is due to the “fine dynamic balance between too much direction and too little direction” (Fullan M., 2019, p. 19).

**Table C – Breakdown of Themes (Q8)**

Key Themes	
Distributed	Distributive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared</li> <li>• Delegated</li> <li>• Passed on</li> <li>• Given to you</li> <li>• Focus on the individual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• All levels</li> <li>• Focus on collective/group</li> </ul>

From responses gathered it is clear that there is an understanding of distributed leadership engendering aspects of delegation and task distribution. Distributive on the other hand is described as collaborative, based on a culture of empowerment and autonomy. Interestingly, the word ‘shared’ appears in responses linked to both definitions, however, from subsequent responses it is clear that the *ways in which* leadership is shared in schools determines whether or not it is perceived as distributed or distributive.

Questions 9-12 afforded respondents opportunities to elaborate on leadership experience and practice within their own establishments. The open-ended nature of the questions resulted in a variety of responses with specific examples directly linked to individual contexts. We collated responses that are representative of the wider responses and have summarised recurrent themes in Table D.

**Table D. Summary of Questionnaire Responses (9-12)**

Questions		Examples	Limitations
<b>Q9</b>	How effective do you feel distributive leadership practice is within your school or establishment?	Decision-Making, Empowerment, Working Parties	Motivation
<b>Q10</b>	Please describe some of your experiences of distributive leadership practice within your school or establishment.	School Improvement Planning, CLPL, Moderation, Practitioner Enquiry, Curriculum Leadership	N/A
<b>Q11</b>	In what ways has distributive leadership practice in your school or establishment provided you with opportunities to develop leadership skills.	Empowerment, Ownership and Autonomy, Skills Development/Confidence, Leadership of Learning	Variable opportunities within establishments
<b>Q12</b>	What, in your opinion, would further support or enhance distributive leadership opportunities at all levels within your school or establishment?	More CLPL, Protected Time, More Opportunities for Collegiate Working, Cross-Sector Working, Sharing Good Practice	

## Head Teacher Questionnaire

In addition to seeking practitioners' views, we created an adapted online questionnaire to obtain information regarding head of establishments' perceptions of leadership theory and practice.

From the 11% who responded, all were confident that there are meaningful opportunities to develop relationships through collaborative working across their establishments both within the local authority and beyond, for example, the West Partnership.

In examples of good practice, distributive leadership was illustrated as the mobilisation of leadership expertise based on the skill sets of individuals at all levels. Fundamentally, a sense of connected autonomy to plan and implement strategic improvement and outcomes for learners was considered necessary by the respondents.

In comparing both, in simple terms, distributed leadership was termed as delegation of tasks with clear specific direction, an outcome that could be achieved by anyone regardless of their skill set. Distributive leadership was viewed as providing the opportunity to lead with autonomy, using talents, skills and expertise in an environment underpinned by a safe culture of trust, collegiality and shared vision. It was felt that the environment fosters a sense that staff views are respected and listened to, where their opinions are truly valued, and their professionalism rightly recognised. In the best examples, collegiality extends beyond school staff and includes families, learners and partners. Consequently, all stakeholder groups become integral to the change process with all sharing their knowledge, experiences and ideas in order to improve outcomes for learners.

Where examples of good practice were shared, self-evaluation and related curriculum development work is keenly focused on learners. Establishment improvement plans inform the need and desired outcomes of change. Ensuring the appropriate climate and the promotion of true collaboration, permits practitioners to be agents of change.

When asked to consider how head teachers empower and support staff to engage in the decision-making process to improve outcomes for learners, the following was discussed.

Using the depth of knowledge we have about our learners and the context of our community allows us to target approaches. Data based decision making also ensures improved outcomes for learners across learning, teaching and assessment. It is however crucial that the data and the local context are considered equally to provide for context specific improvements to be constructed. The self-evaluation and PRD process are crucial components to this.

## Focus Groups

### C. A series of three focus groups to represent a cross-section of teachers and specialists discussing participants' personal experiences in the context of leadership practice

**Table E. Summary of Focus Group Responses**

Focus Group 1	No.	Focus Group 2	No.	Focus Group 3	No.
Role		Role		Role	
Classroom Teacher	2	Classroom Teacher	2	Classroom Teacher	3
Principal Teacher	2	Principal Teacher	2	Principal Teacher	1
Pupil Support Assistant	1	Pupil Support Assistant	1		
Child Development Officer	1				

**Question 1**

**What do you think the difference between distributed and distributive leadership is?**

Similarly to the questionnaire responses, some of the focus group participants found it difficult to differentiate between distributed and distributive leadership. **Focus Group 1** described the difference as: “Distributed is when something is delegated or handed to someone. Coming from the top down and telling people what to do.” They described distributive as “Given something to do with support, advice and mentoring, drawing on people’s strengths and using them.” **Focus Group 2** described distributive leadership as “Something given to you and distributed as when you ask for an opportunity”. **Focus Group 3** described distributed as “Being told what to do or done to you and distributive as collegiate, common goal and having a voice.” Two of the three groups found it difficult to distinguish the difference between distributed and distributive leadership, confirming the challenges alluded to previously.

**Question 2**

**What do you think the culture and ethos of the school needs to be like in order to ensure effective distributive leadership? Provide examples.**

**Focus Group 1** spoke of the importance of ethos within the school and a feeling that everyone is trusted and valued, making people feel that they can step forward for leadership opportunities. They spoke of the importance of knowing staff in the school and providing effective support and encouraging people not to be afraid to make mistakes. They described a culture of collaboration, empowerment and confidence building through the school culture. The group provided examples including involvement in learning sets, sharing individual practitioner inquiry. **Focus Group 2** spoke of the importance of good relationships with Senior Leadership Team and them knowing individual teacher’s strengths and open to ideas. They spoke positively of being challenged and supported. The group provided examples including involvement in University leadership course, leadership academy and being a language leader. **Focus Group 3** discussed the importance of respect for everyone’s voice and being valued. They spoke of everyone participating and staff feeling comfortable to lead in certain areas, playing on people’s strengths. They provided examples of leadership of curriculum areas, autonomy in the classroom and providing time for staff to share learning experiences.

**Question 3**

**In what ways in your school do you ensure that there is shared purpose and vision for leadership at all levels?**

**Focus Group 1** provided examples of decisions being made through staff consultation. They spoke of School Improvement Plan and opportunities for staff to reflect. They also described how staff can share skills and autonomy and agency has been explored with staff. **Focus Group 2** spoke of the School Improvement Plan and how it is analysed by whole school team at staff meetings. This helped to create a shared vision for improving learning and teaching and staff discussed elements they would take forward. **Focus Group 3** described all staff being involved in School Improvement Planning and the fact that analysis of data is done at all levels.

**Question 4**

**In what ways are you empowered to make decisions that lead to change and improvement in experiences for children?**

**Focus Group 1** spoke of the opportunities provided to engage in appropriate CLPL activities and time given to support development activities and to try out something new. They described opportunities and consultation on school improvement priorities. They provided examples including staff coffee and chat sessions to discuss reading materials, inquiry-based learning, creative learning rooms and development time once a week. **Focus Group 2** talked about the open-door policy at the school and feeling that they were able to approach members of the management team for support. Having the freedom to follow interests of the children or the teachers was welcomed. A practitioner spoke about being a keen fisherman and being allowed to do Clyde in the classroom. Professional inquiries are completed by all staff. P5 are focusing on play-based learning. Other stages are focusing on the influence of digital learning. The data gathered from these will be shared across the staff group in March or April. Lesson study was discussed where staff planned collegiately with stage colleagues. This term they are working together to plan a Numeracy and Maths lesson, then in the following terms there will be literacy and health and wellbeing focus. The PSA talked about the range of ways they use their own skills to lead on idea for movement breaks for pupils, arts and crafts, Lego and gardening and flag football. The group also provided examples of Primary 7 leadership opportunities including opportunity to lead a lunchtime club. **Focus Group 3** discussed having the freedom to try new things, gather feedback from children and having the autonomy to make decisions. They described examples of how they use analysis of data to inform practice, how staff use of tracking database, evaluation of the School Improvement Plan, Professional Dialogues, Professional Review and Development and Practitioner Inquiry to inform and improve.

**Question 5**

**What opportunities have you had to engage professionally and work with others in a collegiate way? What do you think has been the most valuable experience for you?**

**Focus Group 1** provided examples which included Cluster Science Champion, Language Leader, Froebel group, hoping to create training opportunities for others, school working parties and cluster working groups. Early years staff provided examples including ERC Early Years Teaching and Learning group, nursery reciprocal visits and the Early Years Neighbourhood Group. The Pupil Support Assistant described Chatterbox - communal training they had participated in. **Focus Group 2** described a number of activities they had engaged in and they felt were valuable. Examples included cluster and authority opportunities to visit other schools and authority wide moderation allowing staff to work with colleagues from across the authority and from other stages as well as teachers visiting other schools and classrooms to see pedagogical approaches. They provided further examples of working collegiately including working with Quality Improvement Officer during data sessions to inform judgements, working with the link Educational Psychologist to discuss how staff can support children with additional support needs and specific approaches to support English as Additional Language (EAL) and nurture. **Focus Group 3** provided a number of examples including the new moderation model with staff working in pods and trios, cluster standing committees, working with ERC literacy development staff, working to further develop Science through ERC STEM ambassador and health and wellbeing support teachers working in partnership with teachers to support the wellbeing needs of learners. They described working with other schools to share resources and good practice.

## Question 6

**What personal and professional development have you engaged in to enhance your leadership skills?**

**Focus Group 1** provided examples of professional development including participation in the Froebelian leadership certificate, coaching from members of SLT, the summer immersion course to Cannes, learning from others in the leadership team through leadership posts, leadership opportunities in nursery, CLPL for staff and mentoring NQTs. **Focus Group 2** shared some of their experiences including the Froebel course, Education Scotland's Leadership development resources/opportunities and a school working party to introduce Maths and Numeracy approaches. Staff also spoke of resources they had produced individually and with colleagues based on their own professional interests, for example, creating bereavement guidance and EAL resources. **Focus Group 3** examples included leading after school clubs enable us to lead in different areas. Professional Review and Development (PRDs) allow for professional discussion around targets and areas for improvement. They also mentioned Skills Academy where teachers have a pathway and children move round between each one. This has supported staff to lead within different areas (either taking a skill further or learning a new skill and learning from others) as well as the Education Scotland teacher leadership course and the West Partnership moderation course.

## Question 7

**What impact has any leadership activity you have been involved in had on the learners in your care?**

**Focus Group 1** described the impact of the Froebelian course as: developing a sense of community – children taking risks and leading learning at home. Children are also the starting point in planning leadership activities. Through Family-Centred Gold accreditation parents have noted improvements in communication between school and home. Enquiry-based learning led to independence, children taking opportunities to develop creativity and communication skills. Post-covid support focused on nurture and mental health have also had a positive impact on learners. **Focus Group 2** described an identified CLPL opportunity where a class piloted a neurodiversity series of lessons. This led to the children having a wider understanding about specific supports that some children need. The inclusive classroom approach and opportunities for children to present at assemblies and in class also had a positive impact. They spoke of teaching backwards and a Pivotal Education input that had a positive impact on the learners and practice. They felt that staff professional reading activities where teachers read identified chapters and reflected on this through staff professional dialogue has had positive results and aided understanding of key concepts. **Focus Group 3** described examples including Daily Literacy Learning (DLL). Pre and post data showed great progress for learners and further success was achieved by rolling this out across the rest of the school. They spoke of how the progressive structure of DLL has been helpful across the school. Other examples included the North Lanarkshire Active Literacy Programme which was introduced after lockdown. Staff discussed the fact that the freedom to try this new approach led to improvements in results for children in P1-3. The new moderation model is likely to make teacher judgements more robust moving forward.

## Question 8

What would you suggest would enhance/encourage/support your leadership development moving forward?

**Focus Group 1** suggestions included the need to continue with protected time for collegiate experiences. They felt more opportunities to visit other schools and collaborate with other professionals would be beneficial as well as more informal opportunities for collaboration. **Focus Group 2** felt that more cluster leadership opportunities for teachers would be helpful, particularly for class teachers. Leadership teams engaging in CLPL opportunities together has been beneficial. More opportunities to engage in CLPL with high school staff would be welcomed. They also mentioned opportunities to engage with further qualifications such as funded Post-Graduate Certificates or Masters-levels modules. Perhaps having a mentor who has been through the process would encourage and support this process further. **Focus Group 3** suggested continued opportunities to put forward thoughts and ideas to SLT and continued staff opportunities to attend appropriate CLPL. Sharing leadership opportunities at all levels would further build capacity. More opportunities for parents and partners to be involved in leadership initiatives might strengthen relationships and sense of community. Further access to research and literature by signposting to appropriate resources would support professional learning and dialogue.

### Next Steps

- To widen data gathering to obtain a more extensive range of views from different staff roles
- To illustrate examples of distributive leadership which have led to high-quality practice within classrooms and subsequently improved outcomes for learners. This may be best achieved through a case study approach.

## Appendix 1: Establishing a Definition of Distributive Leadership

Distributed	Distributive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distributed leadership is when tasks, roles or responsibilities are <b>delegated</b>, often from management team, with a <b>predetermined outcome</b>.</li> <li><b>Shared</b>.</li> <li>organised by a senior leader, for example. and set tasks are <b>delegated</b>.</li> <li>Distributed is when the MT <b>give others</b> leadership roles/responsibilities.</li> <li>Distributed leadership means to me that people that are chosen or placed in the role are the ones who establish change within the school.</li> <li>Distributed leadership would be more focused on the <b>end goal</b> of achieving something, not taking into consideration the likes of the understanding of the concept that staff truly have and believe.</li> <li>Distributed leadership is <b>delegated</b> to you</li> <li>Distributed leadership is where roles and responsibilities are <b>given to you</b> to do.</li> <li>Distributed leadership has been <b>passed onto you</b> with a specific focus in mind.</li> <li>Distributed as <b>instructional and directed</b> leadership set out through school improvement plan/SLT and school expectations.</li> <li>My understanding is that distributed leadership is when a member of staff is <b>asked</b> to undertake a specific task/responsibility in relation to school improvement.</li> <li>Distributed leadership is that staff are <b>given</b> roles and asked to lead an initiative, the outcome of which will be <b>dictated</b> by SLT.</li> <li>Distributed leadership is <b>sharing</b> leadership/managerial roles.</li> <li>Distributed - My understanding of this is <b>work distributed</b> by the leadership team to individuals.</li> <li>'Distributed' leadership is when managerial roles and responsibilities are <b>handed out</b> to practitioners but without their consultation/ views being taken into consideration.</li> <li>Distributed - this concept is when <b>one individual</b> makes decisions and shares these decisions with other staff members to share management and staff members are being directed.</li> <li>Distributed - leadership opportunities that you undertake with <b>little choice</b>.</li> <li>Distributed - my understanding of distribute leadership is when <b>one staff member</b> makes a decision and shares it amongst the rest of the staff. This type of leadership is one in which staff members are being directed and management is shared.</li> <li>I would say that distributed leadership is about giving leaders in schools <b>ownership</b> by <b>empowering</b> them to lead their teams and drive forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distributive Leadership: When a team of educators from all different levels/stages work <b>collaboratively</b> to create good/positive change in a school.</li> <li>I think distributive gives more <b>ownership</b> to practitioners than distributed.</li> <li>Leadership is undertaken at <b>all levels</b>.</li> <li>Distributive you have a say.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is when leaders within a school need to be given the <b>autonomy</b> to make key decisions in their areas of responsibility.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is where leaders are <b>empowered</b> to take things forward themselves and develop ideas rather than just being told what to do by a 'manager'.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is when management tasks are <b>shared</b> whilst distributed leadership is when there is a <b>sharing</b> of leadership in which <b>people can make decisions</b> and have influence.</li> <li>Distributive leadership <b>empowers</b> all colleagues, no matter their role within the establishment, some form of leadership opportunity, that they feel comfortable to take forward.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is asking for input from <b>everyone</b>, through learning, investigating and informing, to come to a <b>collective</b> decision.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is based more on the journey of the school towards school <b>improvement</b> and the learning of all those involved, such as teachers and parents as stakeholders.</li> <li>Distributive leadership involves <b>shared</b>, <b>collective</b> and extended leadership practice that builds the <b>capacity</b> for <b>change</b> and improvement.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is when staff take <b>ownership</b> of an area of school improvement (e.g. leadership group/committee) and decide on how to take it forward.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is giving staff at <b>all levels</b> the opportunity to lead within the school, for example pupil groups, sharing CPD and knowledge with colleagues.</li> <li>Distributive leadership - an opportunity/<b>autonomy</b> to lead and implement change with others.</li> <li>Distributive leadership is for the <b>empowerment</b> and balance of engaged parties.</li> <li>Distributive <b>empowers</b> staff to take opportunities.</li> <li>Distributive leadership to be an opportunity for me to <b>have a say</b> and encouraged to take <b>ownership</b> of my work.</li> <li>'Distributive' leadership is when practitioners at all levels are consulted, their views valued and opinions heard and all staff have a say in making changes and <b>improvements</b> across the school.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Distributed’ leadership is when managerial roles and responsibilities are handed out to practitioners but without their consultation/ views being taken into consideration.</li> <li>• Distributed leadership – delegation.</li> <li>• Distributed leadership- shared responsibilities with others. This leads to shared vision for the school.</li> <li>• Distributed learning is a shared form of learning.</li> <li>• Distributed = management team.</li> <li>• Distributed leadership is basically shared management.</li> <li>• This concept disperses decision making from one individual to a collective group. Distributed leadership is delegation and others completing responsibilities for SMT.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributive leadership is essentially shared management amongst those with the relevant skills or expertise. Its purpose is to increase the leadership capability within people in a school or nursery so that they can work together to achieve the vision, values and goals. Decision making is by a collective group of people and not by an individual. Within education the head teacher is empowered to lead his team and deliver improvements in terms of the school improvement plan. Leadership is at all levels. She or he then delegates remits or roles and the individual has the autonomy to decide how this is best delivered.</li> </ul>
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- Responses below suggest a lack of a clear understanding of the difference between Distributed and Distributive Leadership
- I don't really understand the difference between the two. However, I am aware that this is a shared style of management where everyone contributes, is engaged in decision making and gives feedback.
- I'm afraid I can't remember hearing either term before.
- No idea of either meaning.
- I am not clear of the difference between the two styles of leadership.
- Not 100% on the different jargon.
- Unsure.
- I do not fully understand the differences between these two leadership strategies.
- They are more or less the same.
- None.
- Unsure.
- I have never heard those terms used before.
- I have no concept of the difference between these terms other than perhaps that they are slightly different ways of sharing leadership responsibilities.
- My understanding is that the leadership styles are similar.

## Appendix 3

### Secondary Middle Leadership Inquiry

#### Question

Is distributive leadership being effectively utilised to develop capacity and collegiality in the system which positively influences quality in the classroom and helps deliver excellent experiences for all?

Senior leaders from all seven secondary schools conducted a collaborative enquiry in relation to the research question. Focus groups were held with middle and senior leaders to explore the following aims of the Leadership Strategy:

- Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of senior leaders.
- Create a sustainable pool of highly skilled and motivated leaders who are equipped to take the next steps into middle and senior leadership.

Participants were invited to discuss the features of distributive leadership in relation to their own schools and experiences using the table below from, “Distributed Leadership Matters” Harris, 2014: Chpt.6, Pg.85.

High Performance	Low Performance
Relational Trust	Suspicion and Mistrust
Open Communication	Covert Communication
Transparency and Openness	Secrecy and Closed Attitudes
Distributed, Collaborative Leadership	Autocratic, Dictatorial Leadership
Collective Working	Individual Working
Independent Learning	Dependent Learning
Constant Reinvention	Conformity
Innovation	Repetition
New Ideas Generated	Existing Ideas Recycled
Future Oriented	Preoccupied With the Past
Collective Capacity Building	Complacency

Discussions reflected the national challenges facing schools post-Covid whilst navigating the uncertainty surrounding forthcoming, large-scale, educational change in a fast-changing educational policy context. Senior leaders were mindful that a future-oriented approach would be required now, more than ever, to protect staff from instability whilst equipping them with the skills to embrace change. Both middle and senior leaders were mindful of the recent changes in leadership across the secondary school estate with five out of seven headteachers having been appointed in the past two years. Hargreaves and O’Connor recognise the potential challenges this could pose:

“It’s hard to collaborate effectively when personnel keep changing. When leaders keep changing, schools constantly lurch from one direction to another and either teachers leave as well, or they learn to wait until the tides of change wash in and out ... When there is a culture of high turnover, teachers behave as self-centred individuals who have to sink or swim by themselves.” (Hargreaves, A and O’Connor M, T, 2017: 97)

However, despite these changes, it is clear that there is evidence of an emerging culture of growth. School leaders are building trust through clear communication and transparency to create a shared vision and middle leaders are part of the change. There was a collective recognition that,

“...building and sustaining trust is a critical feature of highly effective school leaders and that without the ability to nurture trusting relationships the potential to improve organisational performance will be dramatically reduced.” (Harris, 2013: 551)

However, it was evident from focus group discussions that schools were at different stages of development in this area. Following a change of leadership, a number of schools have been reviewing their Vision, Values and Aims or Mission Statements to help clarify shared values and aspirations, build a collective understanding of context and shape future strategic leadership priorities. As a result, almost all schools noted a shift in culture towards a shared vision and a renewed enthusiasm for building staff leadership capacity through high quality CLPL programmes such as: Improving our Classrooms/ Departments, Osiris OTI Programme, Visible Learning, practitioner enquiry, partnership working and bespoke in-house professional learning opportunities.

Evidence from Local Authority Collaborative Improvement Visits (CIVs) would suggest that there has been an increased focus on distributive leadership across our schools since the launch of the Leadership Strategy in 2019. However, while staff could showcase what they were doing in their schools, there was limited evidence of staff being able to discuss in detail the features or impact of effective distributive leadership. Despite this, focus group discussions with Middle Leaders demonstrated a positive shift towards a more distributive model of leadership which was having an impact on their approach to leading their teams. Almost all secondary schools had introduced in-house leadership programmes for aspiring middle leaders and most had engaged with CLPL to support existing middle leaders such as; Education Scotland’s Collaborative Middle Leadership Programme and the Osiris Middle Leadership programme. This is leading to increased confidence in middle leaders to share practice beyond their own establishment and being more open to learn from others. It was clear that cultures have been established to try new things, innovate and improve. However, whilst almost all middle leaders agreed that CIVs are very positive experience which build their leadership capacity and professional knowledge and expertise, there is scope for a more coherent and structured approach to sharing practice via subject groups following CIVs.

It was evident that there is a collective understanding of the importance of collaboration and building leadership capacity across the school community which Bush argues,

“... is now accepted that leadership skills and capability extend well beyond the formal head, and that involving senior and middle leaders is likely to enhance the quality of decision making... Effective teams enhance leadership density, by spreading tasks, and have greater impact on colleagues and learners than a single individual.” (Bush, 2012:1)

There was a general view that school leadership teams trust middle leaders to carry out a given leadership role. Ideas are listened to and valued, and there is a shared expectation and commitment to improve the outcomes of children and young people. The majority of middle leaders feel trusted and empowered to lead their teams/remits. However, the next step would be to develop strategic and proactive middle leaders who are able to develop and channel “a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present” (Davies, 2012, Chapter 9, p.6) into an increased ability to innovate and plan strategically for improvement – albeit within the school’s overarching vision for improvement.

Almost all senior leaders highlighted the need for the greater autonomy which is emerging in our schools to be accompanied by greater accountability and resilience. Built on foundations of trust and accountability, Atwal (2019) highlights the need for authentic responsibility, suggesting that Senior Leaders must give leaders the capacity to be innovative and make decisions linked to their area of responsibility, without constant monitoring. In addition, a robust approach to not only building leadership capacity but also resilience and accountability could encourage greater innovation and creativity, “Creativity, risk taking, and innovation thrive in a culture of intrinsic accountability.” Fullan, 2019: 15

There was a view amongst senior leaders that not all leadership opportunities for aspiring leaders prepared them for the accountability that comes with leadership. There is scope for leadership programmes within schools to explore this area more fully with aspiring leaders and to ensure that opportunities to lead come with opportunities to reflect and evaluate impact. There was also a suggestion that DHT remits could be better linked to Quality Indicators in order to create stronger conditions for strategic leadership and ensure accountability. This would enable greater sharing of practice amongst senior leaders and facilitate opportunities to collaborate across the seven secondary schools.

Middle leaders highlighted their professional growth with reference to the increased provision of opportunities to grow and develop professionally, learn continuously, and expand their own skills through the work life of the school. Participants shared that they are encouraged to lead their own professional learning journey and reflect on the professional standards to work collectively and innovate. Practitioner enquiry approaches are building agency and leading to collaborative professionalism. The PRD process is valued and a number of schools are making good use of a coaching approach to assist middle leaders in identifying their professional learning requirements. There was also an emerging theme of transparency. Middle leaders were more aware of their leadership potential. Individuals were able to share regular opportunities for both formal and informal career development discussions and it was evident that if middle leaders had an area of strength, they were encouraged to share their experience and put themselves forward for leadership activities.

Elmore argues that professional learning should be

‘collective good rather than a private or individual good, and its value should be judged by what it contributes to the individual’s capacity to improve and the quality of instruction in the school and school system’. (2002, p14).

Engagement with colleagues to reflect and share their findings is leading to change and promoting an active view of learning. Learning communities, within and between schools, are viewed as an effective way of bringing about and sustaining school improvements. Indeed, it is evident that middle leaders are having a positive effect and influence on school life. ERC’s Learning and Teaching Strategy which was launched three years ago, has also contributed to improvements in this area. A number of schools have engaged with outside partners to further strengthen and innovate their approaches to learning and teaching. In some schools, there is evidence of this focus on pedagogy leading to more consistent, creative and engaging approaches to learning and teaching. (possible link to SLHS and BHS case studies here???) As we move towards collaborative pedagogies, there are increased informal opportunities to learn and lead together to build capacity in the system. There has been an increase in the number of middle leaders visiting and collaborating with partner schools in the areas of learning and teaching, curriculum design and assessment and moderation. The excellent collaborative practice which emerged as a result of the Alternative Certification Model has been sustained and built upon across all secondary schools. As Fullan notes,

‘the power of collective capacity is that it enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things- for two reasons. One is that knowledge about effective practice becomes more widely available and accessible on a daily basis. The second reason is more powerful still - working together generates commitment’ (2010a p.72)

The conditions are now ripe for our schools to capitalise on this emerging practice by developing more formal opportunities to share and collaborate in these areas.

Middle leaders commented that there are more opportunities to take risks and focus on innovation to be future oriented and strategically driven. They are encouraged to look outwards to build capacity, and to be more flexible and fast-moving in the changing context. However, it should be noted that while middle leaders feel they have increased opportunities to take risks, there was evidence to suggest that this is emerging practice as relational trust continues to be established following period of change. Fullan (2019: 20) argues,

“Overcoming fear of risk taking is critical to challenging the status quo. To help leaders and teachers take risks, it is important to plan out strategies for change, take small steps first, and develop skills to effective risk taking.”

Whilst senior leaders espoused a commitment to considered risk-taking, there is still a degree of caution amongst many middle leaders. There is scope to develop middle leader capacity to engage more fully in strategic thinking, planning and processes to ensure the confidence to take calculated risks.

Participants suggested that building leadership capacity across the school and not just with a “select few” could help to create the conditions for considered risk-taking to flourish. Indeed Bennett et al. (2003a and 2003b) identified that the pool or “boundaries of leadership” should not be limited by formal role or position but defined by expertise and creativity.

<https://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=Improving-school-leadership>

Ultimately, we need to continue to build leadership capacity across our schools at all levels to (next steps)

- Prepare for future changes. How do our leadership approaches support this journey?
- Time for DHTs to collaborate and share good practice.
- Continue to develop relational trust.
- Develop resilience to accept accountability.
- Support middle leaders with the ‘how’
- Provide middle leaders with discretion over strategic direction setting and enhance their capacity to develop school plans with measurable outcomes
- Promote “data-wise” leadership. Provide support and training opportunities for middle leaders to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to monitor progress and use data effectively to improve practice.
- Develop approaches to modelling
- Create leaders for the future
- Focus on outcomes for young people
- Address staff mistrust and fatigue due to constant change.
- Develop an understanding that independent learning is positive, however we need to move to collective efficacy.

Overall, existing and aspirant middle leaders feel they are well supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of senior leaders. However, it is clear that there is scope to re-invigorate middle leadership with high quality opportunities to collaborate, share practice, take risks and innovate practice in relation to their leadership of curriculum and learning and teaching in order to continue to improve outcomes for learners and prepare for future challenges. There is also scope to build leadership capacity more widely across our schools and not just through existing promoted structures in order to create a sustainable pool of highly skilled and motivated leaders who are equipped to take the next steps into middle and senior leadership.

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**Everyone Attaining,  
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East Renfrewshire Education Department

# Leadership Strategy 2023-2028



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## Foreword by Convener for Education and Equalities Councillor Andrew Anderson

As the convener for Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure, I am pleased to introduce the Education Department's Leadership Strategy for 2023 -2028. The strategy outlines our ambition to ensure that learners are placed at the heart of everything we do in education and that their success fundamentally depends upon the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms and playrooms, the quality of learning experiences and the quality of leadership in all our establishments at every level.

This strategy is bold in proposing leadership pathways to inspire people to become leaders in our establishments, to support this with successional leadership opportunities for aspiring and talented practitioners who are committed to improvement and to ensuring every learner fulfils their own high aspirations.

It identifies key aims that will be achieved through clearly defined actions which will be implemented by the Education Department, establishments and individual practitioners themselves, in order to deliver the required outcomes. This outcome focused approach will ensure we develop inspirational leaders for the future whilst supporting our established leaders to deliver excellent experiences for all our learners and staff.

I commend the Leadership Strategy to you and invite parents, carers and all other partners to work with staff in our schools and services in delivering the key aims identified in the action plan.



**Councillor Andrew Anderson**

Convener for Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure



# Introduction

*In the past jobs were about muscles, now they are about brains, but in the future they'll be about the heart.*

*Miniuche Shafik, director, London School of Economics*

Since the launch of the East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) Education Department Leadership Strategy in 2019, most areas of public and personal life have changed significantly and at pace. The coronavirus pandemic had a wide reaching and pervasive impact on the whole of the education system in Scotland, and on society at large. ERC Education Department, establishments, education professionals and local government staff rose to the challenge and delivered for our communities, children and young people. As schools have settled back to a more normal way of working, the demands and expectations on establishments, the scale and pace of change, combined with challenging budget settlements, provide a contentious educational landscape which has placed ever increasing pressures on leaders at all levels in the system.

In addition, politically there is a desire by the Scottish Government for more establishment based decision making in the context of an ambitious national vision for improved outcomes for all learners. The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (NIF 2023)<sup>1</sup>, has set a vision and expectation of priorities for Scottish education and together with the National Discussion on the Future of Scottish Education (2023)<sup>2</sup> and the Hayward Review of qualifications and assessment (2023)<sup>3</sup>, is intended to provide the opportunity for fresh innovative ideas to drive improvement. Within this backdrop, the challenge facing ERC Education Department is to continue to develop the leadership capacity and resilience of our workforce to manage these significant challenges and others that will follow.



Harris (2014)<sup>4</sup> highlights in her work that there is no single example of school reform or system transformation without some change in leadership or leadership practice, and that in terms of establishment performance, leadership is second only to the influence of teaching and learning on student outcomes (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008)<sup>5</sup>. Investment in building leadership capacity is therefore essential if we are to bring about required change in the system. However, such investment is only effective if it makes a real and sustainable difference where it matters most, that is, in improved experiences and outcomes for all learners.

In 2019, the ERC Leadership Strategy recognised that a bold and ambitious approach to leadership was required, one that recognises that developing leadership capacity takes time and must be a continual process involving constant reflection and re-evaluation from learned experience. As Goffee et al (2015, pxi)<sup>6</sup> explain;

*“Great leaders are never finished. All of us are constantly challenged to renew and review our leadership skills.”*

As such, if our schools are to translate the aspirations of national policy as set out in the NIF (2023, p5)<sup>1</sup> in ‘ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap’, we will need to ensure robust levels of leadership at all levels of the system. Such an endeavour will require our school leaders to be selfless, reflective, restless learners with the ability and desire to develop leadership in others, a point argued strongly by Hallgarten et al (2015)<sup>7</sup> and highlighted by ADES (ADES, 2017, p7)<sup>8</sup>.

*“If transformation is to come from within education systems themselves, ..... then it will depend upon the emergence of a different kind of leadership. System leaders need to support schools to think more often, more deeply and more radically about their mission. Whilst systems can be far better at creating the enabling conditions and cultures for innovation, schools need to take ultimate responsibility for their own ethos. Inevitably, this points to a significant leadership challenge at all levels. We need leadership which has authentic conviction about the potential for education as humanity’s best hope; and which can both assemble and communicate a compelling case for change.”*

Our 2019 Leadership Strategy explored the notion of being an authentic leader, however in the intervening years leadership theories have almost made authentic leadership an orthodoxy and another educational buzz word. We aim in this updated strategy to review our thinking around authentic leadership to help all practitioners reflect on its true meaning, ensuring that authenticity is not misinterpreted as an individual attribute or an interchangeable leadership style. This review will offer an interpretation that suggests that authenticity manifests itself in a leader’s local, professional and personal context and in our relationships with others. Goffee et al (2019)<sup>9</sup> ask the questions that every leader should be asking of themselves ‘Why should anyone be led by you?’



Authentic leadership has become a paragon of excellence and perfection as it associates leaders with a narrow expected set of values and an individual moral purpose. Hargreaves (2022, page vii)<sup>10</sup> states;

*“In most areas of life perfection is a futile goal. Zero tolerance policies, elimination of achievement gaps, the insistence that failure is not an option and impeccable leadership – for most things, in most circumstances, these ends are all unattainable.”*

As such, our thinking on leadership development will move to an exploration of the term phrased by Munby (2019)<sup>11</sup> of ‘imperfect leadership’ which displays authenticity in its truest sense. When describing imperfect leadership, Hargreaves (2022, pviii)<sup>10</sup> explains that:

*“There is a depth of authenticity and honesty, rather than just a level of skill or sophistication, which marks out the imperfect leader as someone we can trust, admire and follow.”*

Equally, Bretherton states in her joint work with Munby (2022, p1)<sup>10</sup>

*“..there is something powerful and liberating about owning your own imperfections as a leader. Being an imperfect leader creates space for learning and growth; it opens up opportunities for others to contribute when we humbly ask for help. It means we can acknowledge mistakes and failures without writing ourselves off.”*



As well as an exploration of authenticity in leadership, another important aim of the 2019 Leadership Strategy was a determination to ensure all leaders encouraged others to *‘foster leadership capacities at all levels’* by providing meaningful opportunities for development with the aim of building confidence in the system and the individual. In line with McKinsey’s *‘How the world’s most improved school systems keep getting better’*<sup>12</sup>, our strategy introduced the notion of a move towards a distributive rather than a distributed or delegated form of leadership, stating that the strategy is to be underpinned by the notion that *‘Leadership is an act that enables others and allows them in turn to become enablers’*.

In our renewed strategy we will go further and suggest that established Head Teachers and senior leaders should be evoking the type of *‘systems leadership’* outlined by Harris et al (2021)<sup>13</sup> who advocate that senior leaders need to be empowered and trusted to act outside their comfort zone and experience and take risks with others in the system to drive and embed sustainable improvement. They define system leadership as having a systemic orientation in which leaders at any level exert influence beyond their immediate context and are intentionally deployed to drive change and invest in improving other schools in addition to their own. Harris et al (2021)<sup>13</sup> also highlight the importance of distributive leadership in action as a strength of system leadership in enabling organisational change and suggests that true distributive leadership emphasises the collective processes through which individuals and teams work together to create the conditions for change and this collective efficacy impacts positively on educational improvement. Thus distributive leadership needs to go further than just providing opportunities for aspirant leaders in our own establishments and should be a concept that challenges Head Teachers and senior leaders in order to facilitate the greater good of the system as a whole and which ultimately improves the life chances of learners across the school, cluster, local authority and wider.

In keeping true to the principles of our 2019 strategy, a review of distributive leadership within ERC was carried out by a number of teaching, Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) staff and leaders in the authority. Rather than being tasked with evaluating progress in overtaking each of the aims of the 2019 strategy paper, these groups were tasked with holistically evaluating the effective use of distributive leadership. The research question posed was;

***“Is distributive leadership being effectively utilised to develop capacity and collegiality in the system which positively influences quality in the classroom and helps deliver excellent experiences for all?”***

In holistically reviewing our 2019 key aims, we will present our findings from each inquiry group (presented within the Evaluation Report) on how far we have come in embedding this principle and then provide an outline of our proposed next steps in ensuring a culture in ERC where leadership capacity is nurtured, embedded and exercised across all establishments at every level. Since the launch of our Leadership Strategy in 2019, there is much to be celebrated in the progress we have made with regards to leadership development, however if we are to embrace the concept of imperfect leadership we should remain *“restless learners”* and look to build on what has been achieved. In *‘Good to Great’*, Collins (2001)<sup>14</sup>, reminds us that any improvement starts with *‘confronting the brutal facts’* – we need to do the same with this review. As such, we have undertaken an honest evaluation in order to highlight areas of success and aspects where greater self-evaluation and reflection will be required to assess possible alternative pathways, solutions and actions if quality in the classroom and playroom is to be achieved.

Although this updated strategy paper may seem challenging in places, the intention in its design was to provide a think piece which encourages and facilitates deeper discussion, in order that all practitioners who engage with this paper feel they have the space and tools to be *‘a better version of themselves tomorrow than they are today.’* (Munby 2022 p3)<sup>10</sup>

## Revised Key Aims and Action Plan

The overall findings from each research inquiry group reveal that, whilst there are real improvements in line with the Key Aims of our 2019 strategy, distributive leadership in itself doesn't guarantee better performance and it is not necessarily a panacea for success: much depends on the opportunities created, the nature of distributive practice, the support provided and the intentions of those creating the opportunities i.e. our Head Teachers, Heads of Establishment and senior leaders. If distributive leadership is to make any real difference senior leaders in schools have a substantial and integral role to play in making it a positive and meaningful experience. The Key Aims as set out in our 2019 strategy remain relevant in a number of key areas, but where required, have been refreshed to ensure they are now appropriate to the context of the Departments leadership aspirations for all staff. These refreshed Key Aims will be considered within a new and evolving context of national and local policy when informing our action planning and target setting.

### REVISED KEY AIMS

1. Effectively develop resilient and reflective practitioners who consistently deliver high quality learning experiences within and beyond their own setting by engaging individually and collaboratively in contemporary, meaningful and inspiring professional learning.
2. Cultivate an informed, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across all settings by utilising disciplined collaboration which not only develops and enriches the leadership skills of practitioners but provides a positive impact on outcomes for all learners.
3. Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of highly effective leaders, as well as the confidence to begin to explore their own authentic style of leadership.
4. Empower and support all newly appointed Heads of Establishment and Senior Leaders to develop their own authentic leadership in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.
5. Utilise the expertise and depth of experience of established Senior Leaders to inform policy and practice beyond their own settings locally, regionally and nationally to unite in a single focus on collaborative approaches to systemic change aimed at improving the outcomes for all learners.

**To achieve the above we will engage in the actions as set out below**

## KEY AIM 1

Effectively develop, resilient and reflective practitioners who consistently deliver high quality learning experiences within and beyond their own setting by engaging individually and collaboratively in contemporary, meaningful and inspiring professional learning.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT	ACTION	MONITORING & EVALUATION
<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b> Resilient and reflective practitioners who demonstrate the values, knowledge, skills and abilities required to lead learning effectively and who are committed to quality education and making a difference to the lives of all children and young people.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Raised attainment levels across all curricular areas through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in innovative pedagogical practices and thus quality of teaching and learning through the adoption of evidence based practice.</li> <li>• All early career practitioners are confident and know the level they are working towards</li> <li>• Improved pedagogical expertise for all practitioners in order raise attainment and promote achievement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Department will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to ensure where possible we continue to support masters level learning for all staff groups.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for our early career practitioners to work collaboratively with established practitioners on research based professional inquiry linked to improvement priorities.</li> <li>• Develop a programme of CLPL for probationer supporters in school to ensure quality of teaching for our learners and quality experiences for probationers.</li> </ul> <p><b>The School/Early Years Setting will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all practitioners understand and adhere to the requirements of their professional body in terms of professional practice, values and competence.</li> <li>• Look inwards and outwards to provide high level CLPL for practitioners which develops curricular knowledge and pedagogical skill set to enrich the experiences for all learners.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practitioners will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively engage in academic research and professional inquiry to bring about pedagogical improvement which improves outcomes for learners.</li> <li>• Engage in reflective practice to develop and advance career long professional learning and expertise.</li> <li>• Engage in collaborative working with peer practitioners and colleagues to promote the sharing of best practice and excellent experiences for all.</li> <li>• Ensure all professional inquiry activity includes an evaluation of impact on learners and quality of teaching in the classroom. Adopt an approach to their practice where professional inquiry is a stance not an action.</li> </ul>	<p>Improved consistency in the quality of teaching and learning as evidenced by establishment, local and national quality assurance processes.</p> <p>Evaluations from CLPL sessions show satisfaction with sessions and confirmation of improvement in understanding and confidence.</p> <p>Increase in the number of practitioners engaging in professional inquiry.</p> <p>An increase in the number of establishments who can evidence that almost all practitioners regularly engage in inquiry and research which has a measurable positive impact on outcomes for learners as evidenced in standards and quality reports and departmental reviews.</p> <p>Positive feedback received from ERC pupil questionnaires.</p>

## KEY AIM 2

Cultivate an informed, inspiring and creative approach to improving learning and teaching across all settings by utilising disciplined collaboration which not only develops and enriches the leadership skills of practitioners but provides a positive impact on outcomes for all learners.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT	ACTION	MONITORING & EVALUATION
<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b> Confident and innovative practitioners, who inspire colleagues to be creative in their professional practice so that all young people achieve and attain their best through excellent experiences.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> A culture of collaborative inquiry across the setting leading to engaging experiences for learners. Workload is reduced through collaboration to provide more time to enhance learner experiences.</p>	<p><b>The Department will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate partnership working to develop innovative ideas and solutions and to learn from national and international studies as to how they can make an impact locally.</li> <li>Look to provide funding to establish a Research Hub in every ERC Cluster to enable staff and learners to acquire the necessary skills to undertake their own action-based research inquiry which informs learning and teaching to ultimately improve outcomes.</li> </ul> <p><b>The School/Early Years Setting will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Endeavour to provide the space and time for practitioners to plan collaboratively with colleagues to create relevant, engaging and challenging learning experiences for their learners.</li> <li>Provide the opportunity for practitioners to undertake meaningful collaborative inquiry to improve practice and outcomes for learners.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practitioners will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critically examine the connections between their personal and professional attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to affect improvement and, when appropriate, bring about transformative change in practice.</li> <li>Master the skills required to engage critically in collaborative research to challenge and inform professional practice to improve teaching and learning.</li> <li>Work collaboratively to contribute to the professional learning and development of colleagues, by disseminating experience and expertise and seeking opportunities to collectively lead learning and improve practice.</li> </ul>	<p>Evaluations indicate evidence of empowerment across settings leading to innovation and creativity in the classroom</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate the number of practitioners taking part in collaborative opportunities across the school, cluster community and wider.</p> <p>ERC Quality Assurance programme.</p>

## REFRESHED KEY AIM 3

Ensure that existing and aspirant middle leaders are supported and challenged to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of highly effective leaders, as well as the confidence to begin to explore their own authentic style of leadership.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT	ACTION	MONITORING & EVALUATION
<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b> Effective middle leaders who have a well-considered, clearly communicated and ambitious vision and who can provide a clear sense of direction and purpose underpinned by meaningful self-evaluation.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> A culture of distributive leadership at the middle level is embedded and is evident across all establishments.  Learners consistently experience excellent learning, teaching and assessment approaches in all curriculum areas.</p>	<p><b>The Department will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a robust induction programme for middle leaders which focuses on the key skills for effective middle leadership linked to the Standards for Leadership and Management, including interpersonal skills, organisational skills, innovation, professional knowledge and integrity.</li> <li>• Provide the opportunity for middle leaders to be active contributors to strategic policy making rather than implementers.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver and evaluate the aspiring leaders programme with a particular emphasis on exploring personal and professional values and the development of an authentic leadership.</li> </ul> <p><b>The School/Early Years Setting will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop staff potential and take risks on ambitious and capable teachers who have the skills and abilities to make effective leaders.</li> <li>• Develop in middle leaders the skills to build a culture of collegiality demonstrating the frequent sharing of best practice and opportunity to take risk in curriculum innovation.</li> <li>• Utilise the skills, experience and expertise of established middle leaders as mentors for aspiring teacher leaders and newly appointed middle leaders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aspiring and Existing Middle Leaders will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate an authentic commitment to motivating and inspiring learners, acknowledging their social and economic context, individuality and specific learning needs and taking into consideration barriers to learning.</li> <li>• Engage with all aspects of professional practice and work collegiately with all members of our educational communities with enthusiasm, adaptability and constructive criticality.</li> <li>• Build and sustain personal credibility by modelling their commitment to CLPL, integrity and ethical practice, thus developing a culture of trust and respect.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of leadership skills and qualities in others and cultivation a culture of constructive criticality among colleagues.</li> </ul>	<p>Participant evaluations of middle leadership induction programme</p> <p>Participant evaluations of aspiring leadership programme</p> <p>Teacher leadership via peer visit evaluations</p>

## KEY AIM 4

Empower and support all newly appointed Heads of Establishment and Senior Leaders to develop their own authentic in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT	ACTION	MONITORING & EVALUATION
<p><b>Outcome</b> Empower and support newly appointed Heads of Establishment and Senior Leaders to develop their own authentic leadership in order to lead a school community strategically and effectively.</p> <p><b>Impact</b> A strong foundation of agreed inclusive values which align with our desire for authentic leadership and build coherence towards a vision of “Everyone Attaining Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences”.</p> <p>Equity and fairness in the establishment of distributive leadership by creating a sustainable system of challenge, support and accountability.</p> <p>Leaders have a clarity in terms of their personal capacity for growth, for action and for understanding personal strengths and limitations.</p>	<p><b>The Department will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop and review a robust CLPL programme for aspiring Head Teachers with a focus on professional standards for leadership and management and which delivers an effective balance between developing practitioners operationally and strategically and which provides an insight into the importance of emotional intelligence.</li> <li>• Utilise existing Head Teachers and senior leaders as mentors for newly appointed senior leaders in order to support and enhance leadership capacity.</li> <li>• Create a pool of newly appointed senior leaders who can share experiences and provide critical friendships in ‘safe’ settings.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for involvement in collaborative improvement planning, projects, initiatives and self-evaluation within and beyond the local authority to spread innovation, extend impact and increase collective responsibility for quality and equity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aspiring and New Head Teachers will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and sustain a culture where all practitioners and learners are involved in meaningful decision-making about the planning and enhancement of learning and in wider school/centre improvement.</li> <li>• Develop and use knowledge from literature, research and policy sources to support the processes of self-evaluation for the enhancement of professional practice and decision-making.</li> <li>• Engage actively in ongoing professional learning including the Into-Headship qualification to deepen personal and professional skills and knowledge base.</li> <li>• Create meaningful distributive leadership opportunities for staff, within the revised ERC definition.</li> <li>• Encourage flexibility for principal teachers and deposes in order to broaden experiences of leadership across the school and beyond.</li> <li>• Engage critically with knowledge and understanding of research and developments in teaching and learning and work with others to ensure the strategic leadership of relevant developments to improving learner outcomes.</li> <li>• Ensure that meaningful and rigorous PRD takes place regularly and that the outcomes of the process contribute to improvement of professional practice and outcomes for learners.</li> </ul>	<p>Evaluations of 1.3 leadership of change as good or better within Standards and Quality Reports.</p> <p>PRD evaluations reveal growth in confidence and authentic leadership.</p>

# REFRESHED KEY AIM 5

Utilise the expertise and depth of experience of established Senior Leaders to inform policy and practice beyond their own settings locally, regionally and nationally to unite in a single focus on collaborative approaches to systemic change aimed at improving the outcomes for all learners.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT	ACTION	MONITORING & EVALUATION
<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b> Sector leading practice characterised by an ambitious leadership community with the skills, capabilities and motivation to ensure excellent outcomes for all learners.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Build coherence towards the vision of “Everyone attaining everyone achieving through excellent experiences”</p>	<p><b>The Authority will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with established senior leaders to build and embed a shared vocabulary for leadership.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with our established senior leaders to embed a strong foundation of agreed inclusive values which align with our desire for authentic leadership.</li> <li>• Strengthen existing systems to identify and share best practice within the local authority and beyond.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to contribute towards strategic policy development locally, within the regional improvement collaborative and nationally.</li> <li>• Create a coaching culture within our community which can ultimately reach beyond East Renfrewshire to our partner schools and early years settings in the West Partnership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Established Senior Leaders will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trust by encouraging risk-taking and creating the opportunities for empowerment.</li> <li>• Embrace opportunities to build on existing involvement in local authority and regional self-evaluation activities.</li> <li>• Become coaches for newly appointed senior leaders, providing an objective view on headship whilst affirming, probing and challenging less experienced leaders in terms of their decision making strategies.</li> <li>• Act as role model for the vision and values of the local authority and education as a career in general.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement in evaluations of 1.3 leadership of change as very good or better within Standards and Quality Reports.</p> <p>PRD evaluations reveal growth in confidence and authentic leadership.</p> <p>Participation in West Partnership leadership activities.</p> <p>Evaluations indicate a positive impact on authentic leadership development for coaches and coaches.</p>



## Planning For and Measuring Success

Our renewed strategy for leadership informs and empowers school and establishment leaders to set their own actions which will foster a culture of distributive leadership at all levels within the context of their own setting. We have however provided appropriate action planning in this document which sets out our Departmental expectations to ensure all establishments continue to proactively move towards a self-sustaining system of leadership which is values based and has the ambitions and aspirations of our learners at the heart of everything we do.

A strategic planning template is provided ([Appendix 1](#)) to enable establishments to forward plan measurable outcomes which will support these next steps. It is expected that going forward, strategic planning for leadership will be incorporated into the usual improvement planning and reporting processes with successes being evaluated annually in each establishment's Standards and Quality Report and measurable targets being included in the annual School/Establishment Improvement Plan.

The Action Plan which illustrates how we will achieve our aims has a variety of actions specific to the Education Department whilst others will be required to be actioned at establishment level. The Department will update the Local Improvement Plan (LIP) on an annual basis to reflect the aspirations identified in this document and establishments will utilise the LIP to inform their own School Improvement Plans (SIP) to reflect these priorities. Personal Development plans for all staff will take cognisance of the action points and recommendations made in this document ensuring a focus on leadership development, professional inquiry and disciplined collaboration.

The Department and establishments will commit to working together to ensure we have the systems in place that can robustly measure the impact of our actions in this leadership journey and in ensuring our endeavours not only positively impact our staff but also result in improved outcomes for our learners.

In addition a number of Key performance indicators for measuring success have been provided. A caveat to these targets must however be the financial climate within which we are operating to bring about our leadership aims.

Scottish Government has withdrawn all funding for masters level learning which will inevitably impact the number of staff who can undertake this level of learning due to personal financial constraints. In addition, the Departmental budget available for CLPL and leadership activities has reduced significantly which will affect the implementation of some of our next step proposals.

### Reporting on progress

The Department and schools/early years setting undertake annual self-evaluation exercises which are summarised in Standards and Quality Reports. These reports will now include both progress made in meeting the priorities of the National Improvement Framework and detail of the steps taken to develop distributive leadership at all levels.

As is current practice, we shall continue to report annually to East Renfrewshire Council Education Committee on the attainment and achievements of our pupils in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase. We will also report on the quality of education provided by our establishments through Education Scotland school/early years setting inspection reports and Care Inspectorate reports. These will provide further evidence of our progress in implementing the actions set out within this strategy.





## Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Indicator	Achieved (2017-23)	Target (by 2028-29)
1. Number of staff taking Masters level Learning	290	350
2. Number of Staff with Masters Degrees	95	120
3. Number of staff undertaking Professional Inquiry * Based on knowledge of whole school approaches, probationer programmes and feedback from Head Teachers	60%*	90%
4. Number of Staff with Into Headship Qualification	27	40
5. Number of staff engaged in the Aspiring Leaders Programme	28	75
6. Number of Staff engaged in Excellence in Headship Programme	11	20
7. Percentage of positive results on CLPL evaluations	91%	100%
8. Percentage of positive results from evaluations of probationer induction programme. ** Probationers surveyed who agreed that CLPL provided by the local authority has developed professional skills and abilities. *** Probationers surveyed who agreed they have developed as an enquiring professional through completion of a professional inquiry.	100%** 93%***	100% 100%
9. Number of ERC schools achieving good or better in school inspections for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning, teaching and assessment;</li> <li>• Raising attainment and achievement;</li> <li>• Leadership of change.</li> </ul>	8/8 100% 8/8 100% 5/5 100%	100% 100% 100%
10. Number of teachers who have had their Professional learning confirmed through Professional Update and subsequently recorded by the GTCS	100%	100%
11. Number of staff engaged in leadership programmes through the West Partnership.	145	300
12. Number of staff engaged in systems level leadership programmes.	16	35

## Conclusion

Imperfect, authentic leadership is the premise upon which this renewed leadership strategy has been developed. The emphasis on imperfect leadership is to ensure that our strategy does not focus upon the polarisation of one type of leadership as good or bad, but to ensure our strategy provides direction as to how individual leaders can themselves build capacity and understand that to secure future improvement more attention needs to be given to developing leaders who can lead and learn in unpredictable situations. The ADES (2017, p7)<sup>8</sup> think piece, *‘Towards a learning system’* observes that;

*“The translation of national policy aspirations into practical improvements in the lives of young people requires leadership at all levels of the system. It will require work in partnership across networks of relationships as a result of flatter management structures, driven by budget reductions and working across organisation boundaries on a shared endeavour. It will need systemic insight, reflective learning and the ability to develop leadership in others.”*

However, the complexity involved in moving from a focus on individual leaders to a focus on shared leadership should not be underestimated. It has to be viewed as a learning process that takes time, patience and courage. Fullan (2020, p142)<sup>15</sup> explains that *‘the job of the leader is to develop collaborative cultures and leadership of others to the point where the leader becomes dispensable.’* This will take courage, a moral imperative to improve the life chances of all learners over self-promotion and a more radical way of thinking.

This strategy purports that through focused and disciplined collaboration, professional inquiry and distributive leadership, senior leaders can create the internal conditions where professional learning communities become established, grow and

flourish. As senior leaders we are the *‘gatekeepers of change’*. Real transformational change that has a positive impact for our learners will only happen if collectively we endeavour to make it happen. If we are serious about transformational change, it is imperative that we invest in the most powerful forms of professional learning i.e. those that make a difference to learner outcomes.

Under such conditions improved outcomes for learners will be created and true authentic and imperfect leadership will become second nature. To be effective we need to ensure appropriate and meaningful leadership opportunities are being created. There then needs to be challenge and support from the Department to ensure initiatives are delivered effectively, have impact and above all are outcome driven. Just creating communities of professionalism and learning does not guarantee meaningful change or improvement. Real improvement through such professional communities of collaboration and learning, means focusing on our learners first and working relentlessly to improve pedagogy so the needs of both learners and practitioners are effectively met (Harris 2014)<sup>4</sup>. Fullan (2021)<sup>16</sup> highlights his fears regarding real change in the system when he highlighted the words of Giridharadas:

*“My goal is to create change. But change doesn’t happen if you’re just campaigning for it or if, on the other side, you’re just theorizing about it. You need to know how to actually work over a long, patient period to sit down and help change makers carry it out. It’s easy to preach. There are many preachers of what the good thing is to do. There are few who sit down and do it.”*

Together let’s make transformational change happen and become the leaders our practitioners can trust, admire and above all wish to follow.

## Appendix 1

### Leadership Strategic Plan 2023-2026

#### School/Establishment Improvement Priorities

Following engagement with the Leadership Think Piece, this template should be used to identify priorities for next steps over the next 3-year strategic planning cycle. Thereafter, leadership and improvement priorities should be incorporated into self-evaluation school improvement planning under Leadership and Management. This will ensure measurable outcomes leading to continuous improvement.

Use this space to identify over-arching priorities for each of the next steps highlighted in the Leadership Think Piece

#### Learning on the Job

#### Collaborating Effectively

#### Access to High Quality Research

#### Coaching and Opportunities for Personal Reflection

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Everyone Achieving  
through Excellent Experiences**

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