

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 1 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)	Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Councillor Kate Campbell	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Colm Merrick	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Ms Evelyn Yedd
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)	

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Performance & Quality Improvement); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Graeme Hay, Senior Manager Leading Change (Education); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Fiona Johnston, Head Teacher, Barrhead High School together with pupils from Barrhead High School; Gerry O'Neill, Head Teacher, St Ninian's High School; Ainsley McGoldrick, Senior Educational Psychologist; Leanne Dunnet, Acting Head of Centre, Arthurlie Family Centre.

Apology:

Councillors Danny Devlin and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

718. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON BARRHEAD HIGH SCHOOL

719. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following their inspection of Barrhead High School.

The inspection had been carried out in October 2023 and Education Scotland had evaluated 4 quality indicators and provided a short report and letter which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement, both of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The Head of Education (Performance and Quality Improvement) explained that two of the aspects of the work there were found to be excellent, namely: leadership of change; and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Learning, teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement were both found to be very good.

It was highlighted that this was an excellent report, with the evaluations and report matching the department's evaluations, highlighting sector leading practice across Scotland. It also highlighted three areas worth sharing more widely on a national basis which were fully detailed in the report.

The particular strengths and areas for improvement of Barrhead High School were detailed, however, as the school had been judged to be excellent in two indicators, there was no need for an additional action plan to address the areas of improvement.

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

Mrs Johnston, Head Teacher, thanked the committee for the opportunity to address the meeting and explained that she was delighted with the report. She was particularly pleased that the school's strong commitment to inclusion and equity had been recognised. She reflected that the report had been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the entire school community and paid tribute to all of the staff and partners, as well as pupils, some of whom spoke to the Committee, providing examples of the good work being done in the school.

Members of the Committee expressed their congratulations on an outstanding report and a commemorative plaque was presented to the Head Teacher and pupils in recognition of their achievement.

Thereafter, the Committee:

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

SPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING: READINESS TO LEARN

720. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing a spotlight for the Committee on elements of ongoing work being undertaken by the Education

Department and early learning and childcare settings and schools to support children and young people's wellbeing through readiness to learn.

In order to achieve the Education Department's vision statement of *"Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences"* and Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, East Renfrewshire Council had to ensure that all children and young people were ready and able to learn. The information presented in the report provided detail on how the Education Department were working to achieve that aim. In particular, there was a focus around levels of attendance and emotionally based school avoidance.

The report was supported by three presentations. The first was given by Leanne Dunnet readiness to learn within the Early Years settings. Mrs Dunnet provided information on the work taking place in Arthurlie Family Centre reassuring the Committee that the child was at the centre of every piece of work, with nurturing principles at the heart of practice. Physical activities and opportunities, experiential play opportunities and knowledge, learning and creativity opportunities were highlighted, which all improved the physical and mental wellbeing of children. Information was also provided on the range of activities and supports available for children with additional support needs.

The second presentation was given by Ainsley McGoldrick provided information on the work of the Educational Psychology Service. She stressed that early intervention was a key priority for the Service, working in partnership with Early Learning Centres. She explained how children's progress was tracked and the sorts of supports that could be put in place where required, highlighting that these interventions had seen a significant impact, with children requiring less support in the primary education setting as a result. The work of the Early Years Outreach Service was highlighted as being key in this delivery, providing holistic support to families. Through engagement and consultation with parents, practitioners and carers, the importance of the service had been confirmed and best vital information gained to inform best practice in future years.

Finally, a presentation was given by Gerry O'Neill on attendance and wellbeing in the school setting. Mr O'Neill focused on the Learn Well service, as well as particular schemes that were being conducted in St Ninian's High School such as the "Let Us Flourish" programme, which was assisted by the addition of a wellbeing hub. He also gave details on the support provided to school staff to promote awareness of mental health and emotional support issues with a focus on supporting children and young people to remain in class where they had the best chance of learning. Information on wellbeing was being tracked, with programmes of support for young people available when concerns were raised. He concluded with a round up of the many bespoke groups and courses set up to provide support and opportunities to children and young people.

Members discussed the content of the report and the presentations, with a particular focus on attendance due to ill-health. In particular, Councillor Pragnell expressed a desire to meet with the Learn Well service in order to get an insight into their work.

The committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the spotlight regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn; and
- (b) noted that a meeting would be arranged between Councillor Pragnell and the Learn Well service to allow the Councillor to get an insight into their work.

DRAFT STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2022-2023

721. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the proposed content of the Education Department's annual Standards and Quality Report for school session 2022-2023.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 placed a duty on education authorities to produce and publish a Local Improvement Plan on an annual basis, which detailed how it and its schools and services would continuously improve. Based on that plan, a Standards and Quality Report, detailing how it had sought and achieved improvements in provision, was to be produced.

Education Committee had approved the Local Improvement Plan 2022-2025 at its meeting on 3 February 2022 (Page 1766, Item 1875 refers). This formed the basis for the draft Standards and Quality Report which was included as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Standards and Quality Report highlighted very good and excellent standards and practice achieved by the department, its schools and services and was offered as a public record of some of the activities which were undertaken during the previous school session and their impact on stakeholders.

The report set out details on how evidence was gathered to inform the report via a range of reports, questionnaires and consultation activity. The Education Department planned to make the report available electronically to all parents of children attending an East Renfrewshire school or Early Learning and Childcare setting. A limited number of copies would also be distributed to libraries, education, sports and cultural centres as well as other Council buildings.

Discussion took place among members and officers over the potential inclusion of information relating to bids to the Scottish Government Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) funding in the report as well as noting of some wording within the document which members found to be potentially confusing for readers. It was pointed out that decisions regarding the bids referred to for LEIP funding were not within the timeframe of the Report, however, reference would be included to locations where parents and other stakeholders could access more current information if they wished to do so. It was also confirmed that the wording identified as potentially confusing would be addressed before publication of the document.

Further discussion took place around the East Renfrewshire Early Years Tracking Tool and it was confirmed that a demonstration of that Tool could be provided to members, alongside other information, as part of the Early Years report due to be submitted to Committee in June 2024.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- (a) noted the content of the annual Standards and Quality Report;
- (b) agreed that a demonstration of the East Renfrewshire Early Years Tracking Tool and an update on the outcomes and measurement framework being developed nationally, be provided as part of the Early Years report that was due to be submitted to Committee in June 2024;
- (c) noted that the wording on page 59 of the papers which referred to an undertaking to deliver a "differently nuanced deposit return scheme" be looked at and amended to be more easily understood; and

- (d) noted that details would be added to inform parents of how they could access the latest information in terms of current issues, such as the outcomes of LEIP funding bids.

DRAFT LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-2027

722. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Education Department's draft Local Improvement Plan 2022-2025. A copy of the plan accompanied the report.

The Local Improvement Plan (LIP) gave an indication of the department's key areas for improvement over the next three years and was updated annually to take account of changing priorities. Areas of improvement were outlined and priorities would be developed through self-evaluation and information gathered through external evaluations and the implementation of the plan.

The report highlighted the four key areas of the LIP which were its main drivers: Empowerment and Leadership; Social Justice and Wellbeing; Pedagogy and Learning; and Attainment and Progress. Each of those drivers were closely linked to the National Improvement Framework 2024 and detailed the key outcomes, impact and activities of the department for 2024-2027.

The timescale for the implementation of the plan was school sessions 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 and the department would continue to report on progress made with the plan through the annual Standards and Quality Report.

Following a brief discussion where the LIP was widely welcomed by members, the Committee approved the draft Local Improvement Plan 2024-2027.

2023-2028 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

723. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the refreshed Leadership Strategy 2023-2028.

In order to achieve the overarching vision of the Education Department, and those set out in the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (2023) together with the National Discussion on the Future of Scottish Education (2023) and the Hayward Review of Qualifications and Assessment (2023), robust levels of leadership at all levels of education systems had to be ensured. The refreshed Leadership Strategy was attached in three parts, forming the appendices to the report.

The Committee:

- (a) approved the 2023-2028 Leadership Strategy; and
- (b) requested that the Director of Education bring reports to the Committee on the impact of the Strategy's implementation.

CHAIR

