

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 18 April 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)  
Councillor Tony Buchanan  
Councillor Kate Campbell\*  
Councillor Danny Devlin  
Councillor Colm Merrick

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)  
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Gordon Wallace  
Ms Fiona Gilchrist  
Ms Dorothy Graham

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

(\*) indicates remote attendance

**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); and Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Kathleen McGuire, Quality Improvement Manager; Jo McGregor, QIA and Acting Head Teacher, Hillview Primary School; Margaret Allaway, Principal Teacher for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (3-18); Jacqueline Dunn, Head Teacher, Calderwood Lodge Primary School; Liz Matthews, Head Teacher, Kirkhill Primary School; and Christine Downie, Head Teacher, St. Luke's High School.

**Apologies:**

Mr Des Morris and Ms Evelyn Yedd.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**811.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

## **SEF WORKSTREAM 2 – LEARNING AND TEACHING SPOTLIGHT PRESENTATION**

**812.** The Head of Education Services (Performance and Quality Improvement) reported that the presentation would shine a light on aspects of work currently being supported by the Department's Strategic Equity Fund taking place across all educational establishments in order to improve outcomes for all learners. Three key themes had been identified to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, including learning and teaching, and she introduced Kathleen McGuire, Jo McGregor, Margaret Allaway and Jacqueline Dunn to provide further information on the input and impact of this workstream.

Ms McGuire gave a short overview of the workstream, advising that it was aligned to the wider improvement work within East Renfrewshire. She reported that a curriculum learning and teaching assessment reference group had been established in 2021 and one of the aims of the group had been to create and implement a curriculum for excellence vision for 2025. A 3-tiered approach had been introduced based on analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to align schools to the appropriate tier of support for their establishment. This approach was flexible and regularly reviewed to ensure establishments received the appropriate level of support. Improvement plans were put in place following collaboration with establishments, and all settings and staff were provided with access to up to date research and professional learning opportunities to bring about improvement.

Thereafter Ms Allaway and Ms McGregor provided further information on their role as team leads for the workstream. They advised that a digital platform had been developed for use by senior and middle leaders within schools, and provided further information on the wide variety of materials and self-evaluation tools which were available for use. Training had been provided on the platform and how it could be used within establishments, and support would continue to be provided for individual establishments as required, with drop in sessions being arranged as part of that process.

Referring to use of the platform within Calderwood Lodge Primary School, Ms Dunn advised that it had provided staff with the opportunity to clarify their current self-evaluation processes in order to continue to improve outcomes for learners. The toolkit had been amended slightly to fit the process for their school and a persona for learners had been developed to allow staff to get to know each child's individual needs better. She added that the platform had helped to support and guide staff and had improved the pace of change within the school.

Having heard members thank everyone who attended the meeting for an interesting and informative presentation, the Committee noted the SEF Workstream 2 – Learning and Teaching Spotlight Presentation.

## **EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON KIRKHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**813.** The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of Kirkhill Primary School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in December 2023 and Education Scotland had evaluated two quality indicators and provided a short report which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided further information in relation to the inspection process, reporting that an action plan had been developed to address the agreed areas for improvement, and introduced Ms Matthews who provided further information on the inspection.

Ms Matthews reported that pupils were highly motivated and enjoyed learning, and all teaching and support staff worked extremely hard to encourage an inclusive ethos within the school which had been recognised during the inspection process. It was further highlighted during the inspection that Senior pupils had been involved in the Young Leaders Learning Programme, and she was proud of work which had been undertaken within the school to encourage interest in STEM subjects. She added that children and families played a pivotal role in supporting the school ethos, and staff were well placed to take forward the action points referred to within the report. She concluded by thanking all teaching and support staff within Kirkhill Primary School for their efforts in ensuring that the school had received such a positive report, and also thanked pupils and families; the Education Department and QIO team; and Janice Collins and Kathleen McGuire for their ongoing support.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on Kirkhill Primary School; and
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

#### **EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ST. LUKE'S HIGH SCHOOL**

**814.** The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of St. Luke's High School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in December 2023 and Education Scotland had evaluated two quality indicators and provided a short report which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided further information in relation to the inspection process, reporting that an action plan had been developed to address the agreed areas for improvement, and introduced Ms Downie who provided further information on the inspection.

Referring to the short model inspection which had taken place, Ms Downie expressed disappointment that the full model had not been used but was confident that the Quality Indicators which had not been evaluated during this inspection contained sector leading practice. She emphasised the school's strong focus on upskilling staff to ensure consistency across the school and referred to a project which had been introduced to encourage staff to further develop their skills make additional improvements. Although this was a very good report, she added that there would always be room for improvement and staff worked hard to consistently improve the outcomes for all pupils and to ensure that they felt valued and empowered. She referred to the school's collegiate approach to learning and the outstanding contribution which young people made to the school and wider community as part of their strong catholic ethos. In conclusion, Ms Downie thanked the Director of Education and Leadership Team; the QIO team; the Convener of Education and the Education Committee; and Janice Collins for their ongoing support. She also thanked all young people and staff within the school for their hard work, adding that everyone involved with the school would continue to be strategic, creative and innovative to ensure improved outcomes for all learners.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on St. Luke's High School; and
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

## **DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING PROGRESS**

**815.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 9 November 2023 (Page 674, Item 662 refers), when it was agreed, amongst other things, that a report on the impact of implementation of the digital learning and teaching strategy 2024-27, be submitted to the committee in due course, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the impact of, and links between, the digital learning and teaching strategy and the wider work of the department.

The report provided information on how the use of digital technology had impacted on the wider work of the department, categorised under the themes of Digital Equity; The use of inclusive digital technologies to raise attainment for learners with additional support needs; Impact on experiences and outcomes; and Parental engagement and involvement. Schools and early learning centres were able to make judgements and decisions around extending learning beyond the classroom by encouraging children to borrow devices for use at home, and significant departmental investment had enabled a device to be purchased for every child living in SIMD 1, 2 and 3. A Principal Teacher of Equity (Digital Inclusion) had been recruited to play a key role in supporting key equity groups to access a full curriculum and East Renfrewshire had been at the forefront of a project, in conjunction with Education Scotland, to develop accessibility features of devices in classrooms. In addition, all schools had either achieved or were working towards Digital Schools Awards, an externally recognised 3 step programme which assessed and recognised excellence in the use of digital technology in Schools and parental engagement had included providing informative sessions on online safety and introduction of the Safer Schools app for all establishments.

In conclusion, the report highlighted that work in this area was ongoing, particularly in relation to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and ensuring that the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy remained ambitious and forward-thinking to ensure that East Renfrewshire was at the forefront of digital education.

During discussion elected members advised that they would welcome a further presentation in the future, possibly separate from the main Education Committee, on the use of AI within schools.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) that the Director of Education, in liaison with the Chair, would arrange a further presentation on the use of AI within schools; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the continued progress of the delivery of Digital Learning and Teaching.

## **REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE RATE FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE AND CHILDCARE FUNDED PROVISION**

**816.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 17 August 2023 (Page 590, Item 537 refers) when the committee approved an increase in the sustainable hourly rate paid to Funded Providers, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on a further review of the sustainable rate paid to Funded Providers for the provision of the Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) statutory entitlement and seeking approval for the payment of the new rate from 1 April 2024.

The report explained that, in 2023 CoSLA and The Scottish Government undertook a joint review of the sustainable rate setting process and a report was published in December 2023. In addition, The Scottish Government's Programme for Government had set out a commitment to deliver funding to enable childcare workers delivering the statutory entitlement in Funded Providers to be paid at least £12 per hour and this position was confirmed in The Scottish Government's budget set out in late 2023. It was therefore proposed that funding for this would be provided through an increase to the sustainable rate backdated to 1 April 2024.

The Committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the position of CoSLA and The Scottish Government with regards to the sustainable rate paid to Funded Providers;
- (b) approve an increase in the sustainable hourly rate to £6.32; and
- (c) request the Director of Education to arrange for the backdating of the new rate to Monday 1 April 2024.

## **WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE – UPDATE FOR 2024-25 AND BEYOND**

**817.** The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of plans for the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) following the national review of RICs undertaken by The Scottish Government and the associated reduction in funding for 2024-25 onwards.

The report explained that RICs were established in 2017 as a national initiative to bring about improvement for all schools in Scotland and a rapid review of the impact that RICs had had on supporting pupils and practitioners was announced in June 2023. The outcome of the review was published in January 2024, setting out six key themes, and a decision had been taken to taper funding for RICs and repurpose the funding to better support teachers in classrooms and to establish of a Centre for Teaching and Excellence. In 2024-25, RICs would receive 50% of the 2023-24 funding and discussions were ongoing within the West Partnership RIC to develop more detailed plans setting out the themes on which collaboration would continue and how to support these strategically and operationally in 2024-25 and beyond.

Having heard that CoSLA continued to raise concerns about cuts to funding for regional improvement collaboratives despite positive improvements having been made by these groups, and in particular the West Partnership, members advised that they wished to express their disappointment in this decision directly to the Scottish Government.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) that a letter be sent by the Chair, on behalf of the committee, to The Scottish Government expressing disappointment that funding for regional improvement collaboratives had been cut; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the report and comments made.

CHAIR