

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 22 August 2019.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Alan Lafferty	Mr Des Morris

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

**Attending:**

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

**Apology:**

Councillor Caroline Bamforth.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**SQA EXAMINATION DIET 2019**

**978.** Councillor O’Kane invited Dr Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance), to give a brief overview of attainment in East Renfrewshire schools in the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations 2019.

Dr Ratter advised the committee that the 2019 results were outstanding across all the key measures. He explained that the achievements of young people in East Renfrewshire had rightly attracted much publicity and that the Education Department was delighted with the results across its secondary schools, with young people managing to outperform the previous best ever S5 and S6 results.

Before commenting further, Dr Ratter acknowledged that the high standards achieved were as a result of the learning that took place throughout the broad general education and senior phase in conjunction with the hard work of pupils together with support from staff and parents.

He went on to explain that 2015 had been the first year that East Renfrewshire S4 pupils were presented for the new National Qualifications, with 2016 the first year pupils were presented for the new Highers and Advanced Highers. There continued to be changes to courses in the senior phase and 2017/18 and 2018/19 had seen significant changes to the way in which National 5 and then Higher courses were assessed. It was important to highlight the extensive efforts secondary school staff had made in developing high quality courses for S4, S5 and S6 pupils that had resulted in the first class results that pupils had achieved.

Thereafter he highlighted a number of particular achievements. These included, amongst others, continuing strong performance of young people in S4 with 78% of the year group achieving 5 or more qualifications at level 5 or better, up from 75% the previous year; 268 pupils (20% of the year group) achieving 8 or more grade A passes at National 5; and as a result of schools' focus on equity and excellence, there had been a 14% increase in the proportion of S4 pupils registered for free school meals achieving 5 or more awards at National 5 to 54%. Eastwood, St Ninian's and Woodfarm High Schools had all achieved outstanding best ever S4 results. The proportion of S4 pupils in Barrhead High School who achieved 5 or more awards at National 5 had increased by nearly 9% to 60%, the second highest result ever. St Luke's High School had its best ever performance for the proportion of S4 pupils achieving 5 or more awards at National 4.

The Higher results for S5 pupils were very strong across all measures with 81% of the original roll achieving 1 or more Highers, similar to last year, and 65% attaining 3 or more Highers. The proportion of the S4 roll that had achieved 5 or more Highers was 44%, the second highest result to date. Eastwood High School had its best results for 3 or more Highers and Barrhead and Williamwood High Schools had their best ever S5 results for 5 or more Highers. Mearns Castle High School had maintained very high attainment across key S5 measures. A total of 165 young people across the authority had achieved 5 or more Highers at grade A.

At Advanced Higher in S6, the performance across the authority had been very strong with 40% of the original S4 cohort achieving 1 or more Advanced Higher awards, similar to 2018. Eastwood High School had its best ever results for the proportion of S6 pupils achieving 1 or more Advanced Highers, increasing by more than 6%.

Dr Ratter concluded by saying that the improvements at S4, S5 and S6 in the 2019 SQA results provided further clear evidence that the department had raised the bar for all pupils and was delivering on its vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

Councillor Buchanan congratulated the Director and her team on another set of impressive results. He referred to the challenge of maintaining such high levels and how the results achieved suggested that the department was delivering on its aim of improving consistency of learning across the authority.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane welcome the very positive results and remind members that the results were not an end in themselves but a means to opening up future opportunities for the young people of East Renfrewshire, the committee noted the information provided and that a more detailed presentation would be made to a future meeting.

## **HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY – REVIEW OF 2018/19 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2019/20**

**979.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 August 2018 (Page 499, Item 550 refers), when it had been agreed that a further report would be provided at the end of session 2018/19, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education reviewing progress in achieving the key objectives in health, safety and security in 2018/19. The report also looked forward to the forthcoming year noting that the department remained committed to health, safety and security issues and setting further goals for 2019/20. A copy of the Education Department Annual Health, Safety and Security Report accompanied the report.

The Education Senior Manager reported that the department remained committed to maintaining and improving its standards in health, safety and security and this was evidenced by the work undertaken in 2018/19 and the planned activity for 2019/20 details of which were contained in the report. Priority areas for 2019/20 included, amongst others, the completion of fire warden and manual handling training for 20% of schools; reviews and updates of GLOW documents, Standard Circular 33 (Safety in Outdoor Education – A Code of Practice), Standard Circular 48 (School Excursions and Educational Visits), and the Code of Practice in Science; development of a chemical safety management protocol for secondary schools; and development of a strategy to implement Occupational Road Risk (ORR) policy across key areas.

Commenting further on the report, the Education Senior Manager highlighted the significant increase in the number of incidents of violence to staff from 262 to 592. She clarified that as in the past, the incidents tended to involve a small number of predominantly younger children with identified additional support needs (ASN) who found the school environment challenging. She went on to explain that a working group consisting of staff in various job roles had been set up to look at the numbers in detail with a view to identifying good practice and areas for improvement.

Mr Morris, commenting on the increase in incidents of violence to staff, highlighted the importance of considering non-teaching staff in schools as well as teachers and commended the proposal to take future reports to the 1<sup>st</sup> Tier JCC which would allow all trades unions with members within the department the opportunity to discuss the position. He also expressed the need to continue to encourage the use of the Accident and Incident Reporting System (AIRS) to report all such incidents in order that the full extent of the problem and the impact of future initiatives to resolve it could be fully monitored.

Responding to an enquiry from Councillor Lafferty who asked if there was evidence of families with ASN children moving into East Renfrewshire specifically to access the excellent facilities for their care which existed in the area, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) reported that there had been evidence of this over the summer period and that this was being carefully monitored. This increase in pupils with ASN moving into and now resident within the Council area was noted. She also reminded the committee that this increase in numbers also had an impact on resources within the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and, as a result, a high level of partnership working between the two services was essential.

Thereafter, having heard Councillor Buchanan welcome the drive towards better recording of all such incidents, and commend the close partnership working with the HSCP and the recommendation to bring future reports to the 1<sup>st</sup> Tier JCC, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the progress made in 2018/19 in achieving the Education Department's agreed health, safety and security objectives;

- (b) approve the health, safety and security objectives recommended for 2019/20; and
- (c) instruct the Director of Education to provide a further report at the end of session 2019/20 and, in line with the Council's reporting arrangements on Health and Safety, submit this for the consideration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tier JCC.

## **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT YEAR END REPORT 2017/18**

**980.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the year end performance of the Education Department based on performance indicators in the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2018 - 21. A copy of the Education Department Year End Report 2018/19 accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that the detailed results contained in Appendix 1 to the report were set out under the ODP outcomes.. Performance indicators for school attainment, attendance and exclusions broadly reflected the academic year 2017/18 and updates in relation to the 2018/19 performance would be provided to a future meeting of the committee.

He went on to explain that the information presented in the report showed a very positive picture overall with key strengths highlighted. These included, amongst others, very good performance in terms of attainment, exclusions and leaver destinations; very high satisfaction levels with East Renfrewshire schools as expressed in the Citizen's Panel and parental questionnaires; and improvements to the school estate with the new-build Maidenhill Primary School and Nursery Class and the ongoing developments in preparation for the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours. A number of areas for further improvement were noted including, amongst others, further improvement to the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people; continuing to empower Head Teachers through effective implementation of the Leadership Strategy; and continuing to progress a wide range of digital solutions, including new Core Systems, to modernise how the department worked and to help mitigate against the impact of future financial savings.

Having heard Councillor Merrick welcome the report and highlight the challenges facing the Council as an already high-performing authority, the committee approved the report as a summary of the Education Department's year end performance for 2018/19.

## **NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**

**981.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for Scottish Education. A copy of the evidence report submitted to Education Scotland accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that the report referred to the introduction of the NIF which was intended to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education, to the planning and reporting duties that underpinned the NIF, and how it mirrored the Council's aspirations as set out in various plans and strategies including the departmental strategy of *Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire*.

In addition, the report explained that the annual Standards and Quality Report produced by the department provided evidence of how the bar had been raised for all learners, whilst at

the same time the inequalities of outcome experienced by the more disadvantaged children and young people in the area had been reduced. This was in addition to setting out progress that had been made towards the NIF's 4 national priorities, details of which were outlined.

Thereafter, having provided brief details of the department's annual evaluation process, the report outlined the sources from which the information contained in the evidence report had been drawn as well as highlighting that the evidence report contained a high level summary of the progress being made locally in delivering the 4 NIF priorities, with a number of examples being listed. These included improvements in the proportion of children and young people in the most deprived 20% achieving the expected levels of literacy and numeracy at the key stages (P1, P4, P7 and S3) over the previous three years; very strong and improving SQA results in S4, S5 and S6; in 2017/18, with the attainment level (based on Curriculum for Excellence performance) of pupils living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2 and those pupils registered for free school meals, being the highest-to-date across all four curricular areas; and from 2016/17 to 2017/18 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils increased at a higher rate than the overall cohort demonstrating that East Renfrewshire schools were closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

The report also listed a number of examples of local drivers for improvement including the Leadership Strategy; the Parental Engagement Strategy; the extensive focus by establishments to ensure a shared understanding of standards and effective moderation of teachers' professional judgements; the development of Literacy, Numeracy and Mathematics strategies and associated professional learning to improve further the quality of the learning, teaching and assessment in these key areas; and the rigorous processes in place to track, monitor and report on progress, including analysing, benchmarking and sharing best practice across the West Partnership in Scotland, amongst others. The report noted that the implementation of priorities would be monitored on an ongoing basis and reported to the committee annually through yearly presentations on attainment and Standards and Quality Reports.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) concluded by explaining that, overall, the Education Department had made strong progress in implementing the priorities associated with the NIF but always remained focussed on seeking further improvement.

Following brief discussion, in the course of which a number of members commended the Director and her team on another very positive report, the committee agreed to note the report.

## **DRAFT ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY**

**982.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the draft Accessibility Strategy. A copy of the draft strategy was appended to the report.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 (The Act), required responsible bodies to prepare and implement long term accessibility strategies to improve over time access to education for pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.

The Act required local authorities to prepare a strategy document setting out how they would meet the accessibility planning duties in respect of improving the physical environment of schools to enable better access to education and associated services; improving access to participation in the curriculum for all children and young people who had a disability or

additional support need; and improving communication with children and young people who had a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support needs preferences expressed by them or their parents.

The strategy required to be considered alongside a range of other legislation relating to school education and disability, including The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000; The Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009) (the ASL Act); The Equality Act 2010; and The Children and Young People Act 2014.

The strategy also required to complement and be consistent with a range of existing departmental guidance including the department's vision statement of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, through Excellent Experiences*; Getting it Right for Every Child, East Renfrewshire 2017; Standard Circular 12: Inclusion; and Standard Circular 48: School Excursions and Educational Visits.

In response to a comment from Dr Angell regarding the numbers of children and young people with additional support needs moving from mainstream schools to specialist provision, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) confirmed that Scotland operated under different legislation from other parts of the UK and that there was a strong presumption in Scotland in favour of mainstreaming. Within East Renfrewshire the department was guided by its educational psychologists when considering whether or not a young person should be moved from mainstream schooling to a specialist unit or provider. She also advised that there were cases where a young person had been moved to a specialist unit but returned to mainstream schooling once their additional need had been addressed.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane express the view that the presumption in favour of mainstreaming had been strengthened in Scotland in contrast to the more lenient admissions policies adopted in other parts of the UK, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the draft Accessibility Strategy; and
- (b) instruct the Director of Education to implement the associated Action Plan.

CHAIR