

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 November 2019.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Allan Lafferty
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Danny Devlin	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	

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); and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Anna Bree, Former Pupil, St Ninian’s High School; and Heather Spooner, Pupil, St Ninian’s High School.

**Apology:**

Councillor Gordon Wallace.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1097.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**PRESENTATION**

**1098.** Councillor O’Kane advised the committee that Anna Bree, a former pupil at St Ninian’s High School had gained the highest marks of any candidate in this year’s SQA Advanced Higher examinations in Biology and Chemistry and that Heather Spooner, a current pupil at the school, had gained the highest mark of any candidate in Higher Human Biology.

On behalf of the committee he commended both on their outstanding achievements and presented them with a small token of congratulation and wished them well in their future endeavours.

## **SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS 2019**

**1099.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 22 August 2019 (Page 901, Item 978 refers), when it had been noted that a full presentation on the performance of learners within East Renfrewshire's schools would be made to a future meeting, Councillor O'Kane invited Dr Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) to make a presentation to the committee.

Dr Ratter provided a comprehensive comparison of performance in 2019 against Virtual Comparator schools highlighting that East Renfrewshire schools had once again performed very well and the quality of awards had increased at all stages. Pupils had achieved outstanding Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and S4, S5 and S6 results and best ever results at S3 CfE (Fourth Level), at 5 or more awards at Level 5 in S4, and at 1 or more awards at Level 6 in Vocational Qualifications. Referring to the teacher judgements in the broad general education (BGE) phase of CfE, he explained that the authority's schools had also achieved excellent results at primary and S3 levels. He went on to advise that results for all East Renfrewshire young people, and particularly for the lowest performing 20%, had again improved, continuing the year on year trend over recent years, and that levels of attainment for young people from the most deprived backgrounds as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and/or Free (School) Meal Entitlement (FME), had increased at a faster rate than the overall cohort, and that this group had performed well above comparator groups nationally. The results provided clear evidence that East Renfrewshire had continued to raise the bar for all learners and also to focus on excellence and equity to ensure that the Department delivered on its vision of "*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*".

Dr Angell welcomed the excellent report and questioned if there was a direct correlation between the improvement in achievement of pupils in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and those in the FME group. In response, Dr Ratter explained that there was no direct correlation between living in the most deprived areas as defined as SIMD 1 and 2 and entitlement to Free School Meals with only about 1/3 of children falling into both groups. Dr Ratter also pointed out that it would be possible to look at other factors such as gender and ethnicity when making comparisons between groups of learners.

Councillor Bamforth raised the issue of the limited range of subjects that could be retaken in S5 if a young person had been unsuccessful in achieving an SQA qualification in S4. In response, Dr Ratter, supported by the Director, explained that the number of courses in S5 and S6 had increased considerably over recent years and that the department and schools continually examined the range of options to ensure that there were suitable pathways through the senior phase, including consortium arrangements for sharing resources between schools, in order to accommodate the needs of every pupil. He went on to explain that individual schools knew their own pupils best and that Head Teachers went to considerable lengths to accommodate and help their pupils.

Councillor Lafferty raised the issue of the difference in performance between the two high schools covering the Barrhead and Neilston areas and asked if the provision of a new building at Barrhead High School had played any part in this. The Director, supported by Councillor O'Kane, explained that although the new building had played a part, the outstanding leadership of the Head Teacher at Barrhead High School had been a very important factor in that school's increased level of attainment.

Councillor Buchanan, supported by Councillor Merrick, welcomed the presentation and highlighted the success in closing the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged young people. They also welcomed the excellent achievements of East Renfrewshire schools in relation to their virtual comparators as well as the depth and breadth of achievement by the young people of East Renfrewshire. They concluded by congratulating all the staff and young people across the authority.

Mr Morris welcomed the presentation and expressed the view that the increase in vocational options had opened up new pathways for the young people of East Renfrewshire. He concluded by adding his congratulations to all the teaching and support staff within the department for their contribution towards another successful year.

Thereafter, having heard Councillor O'Kane thank Dr Ratter for an interesting and informative presentation and echo the Director's comment on the Head Teacher at Barrhead High School, who was due to retire in the very near future, the committee agreed to note the position and the comments made.

CHAIR

