

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 13 June 2019.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	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.

**Also Attending:**

John Docherty, Head Teacher, St Ninian’s High School; Sarah Clark, Head Teacher, Isobel Mair School; Yvonne Donaldson, Head Teacher, Netherlee Primary School; Stuart Maxwell, Head Teacher, Eastwood High School; and Kathleen McGuire, Quality Improvement Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Caroline Bamforth, Alan Lafferty and Jim McLean; and Ms Dorothy Graham.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ST. NINIAN’S HIGH SCHOOL**

**908.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report by Education Scotland following their inspection of St Ninian’s High School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that in assessing the quality indicators in the school, Education Scotland had evaluated 2 of the 4 indicators as excellent and the other 2 indicators as very good.

Key strengths were highlighted including, amongst others, the climate of aspirations in the school underpinned by gospel values, the Catholic faith, mutual respect and nurturing relationships; the motivation and determination of the young people to flourish in a wide range of situations and their great respect for learning; and the highly effective leadership of all staff, their teamwork and commitment to undertaking a range of professional learning.

He went on to explain that this was an outstanding report with the judgements made by Education Scotland being very close to the department's evaluation of the quality of provision. St Ninian's was the first secondary school in Scotland to achieve an evaluation of excellent for raising attainment and achievement. The department was particularly pleased that the leadership of the Head Teacher had been noted in the letter to parents/carers as one of the key strengths.

The inspection team had agreed one area for improvement with the school and the department. However, given that the school had been judged to be excellent in two of the indicators assessed, there was no need for an additional action plan to address the area for improvement. The school would continue to use the results of its own self-evaluation to identify priorities for improvement which would be published in its annual standards and quality report and school plan.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of St Ninian's High School and the 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 St Ninian's High School for a period of 3 years from the date of publication of the report.

A number of members, including Councillors O'Kane and Buchanan, expressed their congratulations to the whole school community for achieving such an outstanding report with particular mention being given to the dedication shown by all staff, the support of parents and carers and the hard work of the young people who attended the school. The Director explained that she intended to meet with all of the staff of the school prior to the summer recess with a view to congratulating them on their contribution to such an excellent report.

Mr Docherty, Head Teacher, explained that he was extremely proud of the report, which had been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the entire school community. He thanked the Education Department Directorate and the committee for their continued support and undertook to pass on the committee's congratulations and comments to all staff and pupils.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane, on behalf of the committee, commend all of those involved in achieving an excellent report, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the content of the Education Scotland report on St Ninian's High School; and
- (b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from May 2019 until May 2022.

## **GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN**

**909.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on progress with the Gaelic Language Plan for East Renfrewshire Council.

The report explained that the draft East Renfrewshire Gaelic Language Plan 2015 – 2019 had been developed following consultation with colleagues across the Council and with support from the nominated officer from the Bord na Gaidhlig. The updated Gaelic Language Plan 2017 – 2022, a copy of which accompanied the report, had been prepared following feedback from Bord na Gaidhlig with timescales amended accordingly.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that a corporate working group had been set up to support the Council to implement, monitor and report on progress with the plan. The group comprised officers from the Education, Environment and Corporate and Community Services departments. He concluded by explaining that the plan would be monitored on an annual basis with a report being submitted to the committee. A copy of the report would be sent to the Bord na Gaidhlig for information.

Councillor O’Kane explained that, as the plan had implications across the wider Council, following discussion by the committee it would be appropriate to remit it to the Cabinet for final approval.

Councillor Buchanan explained that the development of the plan had been undertaken in line with Scottish Government policy and he looked forward to seeing future reports on progress as previously stated.

Responding to a comment by Councillor Wallace in relation to possible equalities implications of the plan, Councillor O’Kane explained that Gaelic was recognised in legislation as a national language and expressed the view that discussion on the issue of equalities would be more appropriate when the plan was remitted to the Cabinet for approval.

Thereafter the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the updated content and timescales of the Gaelic Language Plan for East Renfrewshire; and
- (b) remit the plan to the Cabinet for final approval.

## **EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**

**910.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services, and outlining the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

The report explained that the department’s Early Learning and Childcare Strategy 2016 – 2020 detailed how quality would be at the heart of service delivery through investment in people to ensure a highly skilled and motivated workforce equipped to deliver high quality early learning and childcare; the provision of more support for parents; and the reduction in the achievement gap in early development for the most disadvantaged children. This emphasis on quality had been reiterated in the department’s paper “Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire” which recognised the contribution of high quality ELC that improved outcomes, reduced or prevented the need for future intervention and was delivered by a highly qualified and skilled workforce, as being fundamental to achieving the department’s vision of “Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences”.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the report came at a time of considerable focus on early years both locally and nationally. She went on to highlight a few key areas including, amongst others, the consistent picture of good and very good evaluations by the Care Inspectorate in respect of the department's ELC settings and those who worked in partnership with the department; the increase in the proportion of children achieving their developmental milestones across all Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles which had contributed to a reduction in the attainment gap between those from the most and least affluent deciles from around 26% in 2014-15 to 14% in 2018-19; and the figure of 34% of the current early years workforce holding or working towards a graduate level qualification compared to the national figure of 19%.

She went on to highlight the changes in the pattern of access across the area arising from the increased flexibility offered to parents; the number of parents seeking to defer their child's entry to primary school; and the criteria used by the department in determining the outcome of such requests.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed another very positive report which demonstrated that the department was delivering for parents and looked forward to seeing the impact of the Council's investment in new and upgraded ELC facilities and the rollout of the increase in entitlement from 600 to 1140 hours.

Responding to a comment from Councillor Wallace regarding the aspiration of having a fully graduate workforce in ELC and the support available to staff to help them achieve this, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that all teachers and promoted staff in ELC were currently qualified to graduate level and that financial support was made available to those staff wishing to study for a graduate qualification. However, as a result the Council experienced some leakage of staff to promoted posts in other authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor Merrick regarding the number of requests received annually from parents seeking to defer their child's entry to primary school and the criteria used to determine these requests, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) briefly outlined the processes and procedures used but emphasised that the department would only agree to fund such a request if it believed that deferral was in the best interest of the child. The Director explained that the number of requests for deferral each year was fairly low and offered to provide detailed information directly to Councillor Merrick outwith the meeting.

Following further brief discussion the committee agreed to note the report and related comments.

## **PRESENTATION - EVERYONE ATTAINING, EVERYONE ACHIEVING THROUGH EXCELLENT EXPERIENCES - ROLE OF THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

**911.** Councillor O'Kane introduced Kathleen McGuire, Quality Improvement Officer (QIO); Sarah Clark, Yvonne Donaldson and Stuart Maxwell, Head Teachers at Isobel Mair School, Netherlee Primary School and Eastwood High School respectively, and invited them to make a short presentation to the committee on the role of the Quality Improvement Team (QIT).

Ms McGuire outlined the 4 key objectives of the QIT, namely raising standards through the conduct of regular quality assurance visits and providing help and support to schools to enable them to get ready for formal Education Scotland inspections; help in understanding how best to make use of the analysis and evaluation of available data; help and encouragement to staff to pursue their own further professional learning; and providing

support and challenge to link establishments. She concluded by inviting the 3 Head Teachers present to outline a number of practical examples of the assistance provided to them by the QIT.

Ms Donaldson outlined the assistance she had received in making best use of key quality improvement documents and how this had assisted her in conducting the school's own self-evaluation process prior to formal reviews and inspections conducted by the QIT and Education Scotland. She also explained how the QIT had challenged her to continually refresh systems within the school and how to include pupils and staff members in driving improvement. She concluded by explaining how the QIT had supported her and her staff in understanding and analysing data for use in driving continuous improvement and how they had worked in partnership to devise a tool which could be used to track the wider achievements of pupils.

Ms Clark outlined the role of the QIT in supporting the wider school cluster and its role in assisting individual schools to conduct their own self-evaluation to support improvement, and their role as critical friends and pastoral supporters. She commended their depth of understanding of the additional support needs (ASN) of many of her pupils and the changing role of the Head Teacher. She concluded by highlighting the opportunities which will be available through the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Improvement Collaborative).

Mr Maxwell concluded the presentation by outlining the key areas of support and challenge from the QIT from the secondary school perspective including data support and its impact on timetabling and attainment; partnership working and the breadth of curriculum choice including vocational courses, college links, Developing the Young Workforce, and providing maximum opportunity and choice for students; the moderation of standards across schools; and the provision of a quality assurance system. He illustrated the success of the Council's emphasis on education by showing a table derived from SQA data showing that East Renfrewshire students had obtained the best results of any Scottish local authority in the percentage of National 5 awards at grades A – C as a percentage of entries, surpassed only by the independent sector.

Responding to a question from Councillor Wallace regarding what lessons, if any, could be learned from the independent sector in terms of SQA examination success rates, the Director explained that a direct comparison could not be made as the independent sector still operated a selection policy whilst local authorities did not. However, she explained that the department could always learn from best practice regardless of the sector from which it came.

Councillor Buchanan expressed the view that, on a like-for-like basis, most of East Renfrewshire's inclusive schools would outperform many schools in the independent sector. Mr Maxwell added that a number of senior pupils exited the independent sector to attend East Renfrewshire schools in order to take advantage of the broader choice of subjects available.

Councillor O'Kane commended the presenters on an excellent and informative presentation and indicated that it had given him a much greater appreciation of the breadth of work carried out by the QIT and its impact on the education of children and young people in East Renfrewshire.

The committee noted the presentation and the comments made.

