

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 4 October 2018.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Ms Mary McIntyre

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

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

Also attending:

Natalie Fitzsimmons, Head Teacher, St Mark’s Primary School; Siobhan McColgan, Head Teacher, Carlibar Primary School; and Willie Inglis, Head Teacher and Ben Harrison, Principal Teacher, Williamwood High School.

Apology:

Mr Des Morris.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

629. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ST MARK’S PRIMARY SCHOOL

630. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report by Education Scotland following their inspection of St Mark’s Primary 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 found three aspects of the work to be good and one indicator had been judged to be very good. Key strengths were highlighted, including the importance placed on the professional learning of staff; the successful use of a wide range of strategies to encourage parental engagement and to support the needs of families sensitively; and children achieving well in the school and benefitting from the many varied experiences which staff and partners provided for them. Three areas for improvement had been identified and an action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement had been drawn up. The Quality Improvement Service (QIS) would work closely with the school and leadership team to support its implementation.

He went on to explain that this was a good report with the evaluations made by Education Scotland reflecting increased expectations nationally and the department's own evaluation of the quality of provision. The department was particularly pleased that the leadership of the relatively recently appointed Head Teacher had been recognised as one of the school's strengths in the letter to parents/carers.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of St Mark's Primary School. The QIS would however revisit the school within 2 years to review the impact of the action plan in addressing the areas highlighted for improvement and to provide a progress report to parents and elected members.

A number of members expressed their congratulations to the whole school community for achieving such a good report with Mrs Graham welcoming in particular the recognition by Education Scotland of the development of "a strong and caring community of learning and faith".

Councillor Wallace cautioned that this report appeared to be less favourable than that recently published in respect of Giffnock Primary School and questioned what was being done to achieve more consistency of attainment across the authority's schools. He particularly asked what was being done to address non-attendance by pupils.

In response, the Head Teacher explained that rigorous monitoring of attendance was in place and that she and the Depute Head Teacher visited pupils' homes to speak to parents/carers to establish the reasons for non-attendance and explained that an Early Bird Club had been started at the school to encourage good attendance.

She went on to thank the committee for the opportunity to address members, explaining that she and the whole school community were pleased with the report. She acknowledged the many positive comments expressed by the committee, and undertook to convey these back to pupils, parents and staff. However, she also acknowledged that there was still work to be done to address the areas for improvement identified by Education Scotland and outlined in the action plan and she looked forward to the follow-up visit by the QIS to review the impact of its implementation.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane commend Ms Fitzsimmons and all connected with the school for a good report and wish them well on their continuing journey of improvement, the committee agreed:-

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

IMPROVING OUTCOMES THROUGH THE PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

631. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the progress made by schools during 2017/18 in improving outcomes through the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and the interventions used and the good practice developed by schools to improve excellence and equity and achieve positive outcomes for all children and young people.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that the PEF was part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge which was about achieving equity in education. The national drive mirrored the focus within the department as set out in the vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*. The focus on improving the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people had been a feature for the department for a number of years with additional funding provided by the Council for the lowest performing pupils since 2011/12.

In 2017, for each child in a publicly funded primary or secondary school who was eligible and registered for free school meals, schools were allocated £1,200. East Renfrewshire schools were allocated a total of £1.37m in PEF in 2017/18. For the year 2018/19 the allocation was £1.41m and a breakdown of the allocation across schools for both years was contained in the report.

Details of the principles agreed as part of the PEF were set out in the report and the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) emphasised that it was important to note that head teachers were expected to have access to the full amount of funding and that the interventions, activities or resources that schools took forward had to be in addition to those already planned. Head teachers were supported to develop PEF plans detailing how resources would be used to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In developing these plans it was important that head teachers clearly identified their attainment gap; drew on research evidence of what was known to be effective; and ensured collaboration with key stakeholders including pupils, parents and trade union colleagues. Head teachers used the additional funding in a variety of different ways to support learners and a summary of the approaches was contained in the report.

He concluded by explaining that as part of the conditions associated with the award of PEF, the department was required to produce a report summarizing the outcomes and performance at an authority level and a high-level summary of the progress made in East Renfrewshire schools was contained in the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) then invited Siobahn McGolgan, Willie Inglis and Ben Harrison to give a brief presentation on the progress made by Carlibar Primary and Williamwood High Schools in improving outcomes for pupils through their use of PEF. The presentation would help illustrate the strategies and good practice developed by these two schools, and help members to continue to support and adequately challenge the department and schools to seek further improvement.

In response to comments and questions from members, the presenters explained that in an effort to sustain future improvements for all children and young people, schools recruited staff, both teaching and support, provided training and career-long professional learning (CLPL) opportunities to develop staff; engaged parents and carers to support their children's learning; purchased and developed additional resources; and made changes in approaches to teaching and learning. The importance of having the right people leading developments

and of engaging fully with parents and pupils to explain what the school was seeking to achieve was also emphasised. The improvement in attainment in both schools as a result of targeted support for particular children and young people was noted by the committee.

The Director of Education outlined how some schools were proactively reaching out to parents and carers to encourage the uptake of free school meals with a view to increasing the allocation of PEF to the Council and ultimately to the benefit of disadvantaged children and young people. It was also explained that the Council's Money Advice and Rights Team (MART) had been briefed on the scheme with a view to encouraging the uptake of free school meals further.

Councillor Buchanan, supported by a number of other members, commended the presenters for an excellent and highly informative presentation and offered his congratulations to all staff involved in the scheme. He explained that teaching staff from East Renfrewshire had met with the Deputy First Minister to emphasise the need for freedom to target PEF where it was most needed and how the use of this welcome additional funding tied in with the Council's own mission statement.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane offer his thanks to the staff concerned and in particular commend the excellent leadership shown in schools across the Council, the committee agreed to note the report as a summary of the progress made by schools in improving outcomes through the Pupil Equity Funding during 2017/18.

CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE CONSULTATIVE PROPOSAL: FUTURE NON-DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF NEILSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MADRAS FAMILY CENTRE; AND FUTURE DENOMINATIONAL (ROMAN CATHOLIC) EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF ST THOMAS' PRIMARY, NEILSTON

632. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 10 May 2018 (Page 390, Item 422 refers) when the committee had agreed that the Director of Education proceed with a consultation on a proposal to establish a learning campus on a joint site in the locale of Neilston and Madras comprising new build replacements for Neilston Primary School, St. Thomas' Primary School and Madras Family Centre as soon as is practically possible, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the results of the consultation exercise. Copies of the original consultation proposal document along with the results of the consultation accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that written representations on the consultative proposal had been sought from all interested parties including the Catholic Church, the Parent Councils of St Thomas' and Neilston Primary Schools. In addition, meetings had been held with each of the Parent Councils as well as a well-attended public meeting chaired by Councillor O'Kane and attended by the Leader of the Council, the Director of Education and other senior officers.

A total of 512 responses to the consultation had been received of which 479 were from statutory consultees including pupils, and 33 from non-statutory respondents, mainly local residents. The vast majority of those who responded, including pupils, were in favour of the proposal. In addition, other statutory groups, including the Parent Council of Neilston Primary, staff groups at Neilston and St Thomas' Primary Schools, the Diocese of Paisley for the Roman Catholic Church and Neilston Community Council agreed with the proposal. In line with the requirement under the relevant legislation in respect of schools consultation,

Education Scotland had submitted a report in relation to the proposal and a copy of their report was included as an appendix to the main report.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) concluded by explaining that at present there was no identified finance available to take forward the proposal to provide the new schools and family centre in Neilston but that the consultation process was a statutory step in seeking to establish this new educational provision. Should the committee approve the proposal the Council would continue to explore any opportunities for investment to take forward the provision of these new facilities whilst progressing its capital planning process.

Responding to comments and questions from members, Councillor O'Kane explained that the proposal was not in any way intended to be seen as a merger of Neilston and St Thomas' Primary schools as the legislation was very clear on this issue. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) went on to explain that should the longer-term vision to incorporate public leisure facilities on the same site come to fruition, the safety of children attending school would be of paramount importance and that this would be fully addressed during the design phase of the project. She also explained that representatives of the Parent Councils of both schools had had the opportunity to visit the Faith Schools Joint Campus at Newton Mearns and had met with the Head Teachers of St Clare's and Calderwood Lodge Primary Schools to discuss their experience of the campus and its creation.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane commend the willingness of local residents to become involved in the proposed project and reiterate that the consultation had been a key step in delivering this new and much needed facility for the community of Neilston, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the results of the education consultation on *Learning in Neilston*; and
- (b) instruct the Director of Education to progress a learning campus on a joint site in the locale of Neilston and Madras comprising new build replacements for Neilston Primary School, St Thomas' Primary School and Madras Family Centre when sufficient financial resources became available.

DRAFT DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

633. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the draft Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy. A copy of the proposed draft strategy accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) outlined the importance of all learners being able to develop the digital skills they needed to be successful in learning, life and work. The draft Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy set out how the department would support children and young people to develop the digital skills they needed. The strategy, which linked clearly to the Council's Community Plan, would also enable staff to develop their skills and confidence in the effective use of technology, thereby contributing to the digital priority set out in the Council's Five Capabilities, had also been designed to complement the Council's own Digital Strategy. The strategy had been set out under the four key national objectives which were the organisers for the Scottish Government's Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy.

He went on to explain that the Council would create physical and virtual digital innovation hubs which would support staff to collaborate and share best practice; work closely with the

IT Service to ensure that a robust digital infrastructure was put in place; work with parents to support their children as they developed the digital skills they required; and set out the actions which the department and schools would take over the period 2018 – 2021 including a range of performance indicators that would measure the impact of the strategy.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) concluded by explaining that progress would be reported to the committee on an annual basis through the presentation on attainment and through the department's and schools' Standards and Quality reports.

Having heard a number of members welcome the report and the draft strategy and emphasise the importance of teaching children that IT could greatly enhance their learning as well as being used judiciously for social media purposes, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the draft Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy; and
- (b) instruct the Director of Education to report to a future meeting on the impact of its implementation.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PLANNING - PROGRESS WITH INITIAL PLAN AND PREPARATION OF PHASE 2

634. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 1 February 2018 (Page 268, Item 301 refers), when it had been agreed that the Director of Education would bring regular reports on the progress and impact of the West Partnership's Improvement Plan to future meetings, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the progress with the initial West Partnership Improvement Plan and the preparation of Phase 2.

The Director of Education highlighted some of the progress achieved through the initial Improvement Plan over the period February – June 2018 including, amongst others, the establishment of robust governance procedures; the development of partnership working and leadership; stakeholder engagement; and the reach into the classroom through engagement with staff at all levels in schools and early learning settings.

She went on to explain that the Phase 2 Plan was very ambitious and was based on a vision of bringing about "*Equity, Excellence and Empowerment*" through 8 themes that had been identified as key areas of work over the next 3-year period. She concluded by explaining that systems had been put in place to ensure that there was internal and external evaluation of the impact of the plan. This had resulted in the establishment of an Evaluation and Reporting Group which had devised baselines and targets which would be used to measure the impact of the work across the region whilst recognising that the work of each local authority would contribute to the success of the partnership and allow it to report on progress.

Councillor O'Kane, supported by Councillor Buchanan, commended the Director for her leadership in much of the work of the partnership; explained that things were moving at considerable pace; and welcomed the introduction of best practice across the partnership as a result of collaborative working.

The committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the progress made with the initial improvement plan;

- (b) note the West Partnership's Phase 2 Plan; and
- (c) instruct the Director of Education to bring reports on its progress and impact to future meetings of the committee.

CHAIR

