

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 15 November 2018.

Present:

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

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 Tony Buchanan (Leader).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

687. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS 2018

688. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 August 2018 (Page 498, Item 549 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 East Renfrewshire’s performance in 2018 against its 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 once again achieved outstanding S4, S5 and S6 results achieving the very good results at 1+, 3+ Highers in S5 and best ever at 5 or more awards at Level 6 in S5 and 1 or more

awards at Level 7 in S6. Referring to the teacher judgements in the broad general education (BGE) phase of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), he explained that the authority's schools had also achieved their best ever 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 young people from the most deprived backgrounds, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and/or Free (School) Meal Entitlement (FME), 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 Ratter went on to explain that intervention and preventative measures would continue to be important as the department moved forward, along with a firm focus on tracking, data gathering, capacity building and sharing of best practice across all levels and all schools. Schools would continue to be ambitious, look for further improvement and work closely in clusters, all with a focus on ensuring the very highest level of attainment and the very best experiences for all learners in the knowledge that this would allow them to progress successfully to the next stage of their education and prepare them for success in life. He concluded by reiterating that there was much to celebrate in this year's results but that the department would not become complacent and would continue to seek ways to achieve even better results for the children and young people of East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Bamforth raised the issue of the high percentage of pupils at Woodfarm High School who lived outwith East Renfrewshire and expressed the view that these pupils often started from a considerably lower base line than pupils who had progressed through East Renfrewshire primary schools and that the "added value" in raising their attainment helped to demonstrate the calibre of teaching staff in East Renfrewshire schools.

Responding to a comment from Councillor Lafferty who expressed some surprise at the lack of breakdown of the figures in terms of gender or ethnicity, Dr Ratter explained that this had been constrained purely by the lack of time and that individual schools such as Mearns Castle High School were looking closely at such splits. He explained that, in general, pupils from ethnic minorities performed less well early on in the BGE but tended to improve by the time they reached the senior phase.

Dr Angell sought further information on the proportion of pupils who moved from S5 into further education (FE) as opposed to S6, in response to which Dr Ratter explained that many of the relatively small numbers of such pupils moved to take advantage of schemes such as graduate apprenticeships where the young person developed practical skills in the workplace but went on to complete a degree as a result of sponsorship by the employer thus considerably reducing their level of post-qualification debt.

Councillor Wallace commended Dr Ratter for a highly informative presentation and noted in particular the increase in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) results and the increase in vocational education offered to pupils. He referred to a recent news article quoting a leading surgeon who stated that newly qualified doctors often demonstrated excellent academic achievement but lacked basic manual dexterity and motor skills. He expressed the view that vocational education, coupled with schemes such as graduate apprenticeships, could help to address such perceived shortcomings. In response, Councillor O'Kane highlighted the belief that the current play-based curriculum at pre-school level would also help in this regard.

Mr Morris congratulated all of the young people of East Renfrewshire on another set of excellent results and commended highly the continuing efforts of teachers and all staff within

the Education Department in helping to achieve these results. He explained that the SQA results were the result of the cumulative efforts by all spanning P1 to S6. He particularly commended the improvement in the results achieved by students in SIMD deciles 1 to 3.

Thereafter, having heard Councillor O’Kane thank Dr Ratter for an interesting and informative presentation, the committee agreed to note the position and the comments made.

CHAIR

