

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 2 February 2017.

Present:

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Ian McAlpine	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Gordon McCaskill	

Councillor Green 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 Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Jim Swift and Vincent Waters.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2367. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2015/16

2368. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the proposed content of the Education Department’s 2015/16 Standards and Quality Report, a copy of which accompanied the report.

Having set out the legislative obligations on local authorities to produce and publish annually a Local Improvement Plan which detailed how schools and services would continuously improve, and based on this plan a Standards and Quality report detailing how improvements in provision had been sought and achieved, the report outlined the progress made by the Education Department and its schools and services in taking forward the improvement agenda set out in the Local Improvement Plan.

The report explained that the department had undertaken a self-evaluation exercise which had informed the draft report and helped outline the steps to be included in the local improvement plan which was the subject of a separate report to the committee. The draft Standards and Quality report highlighted the very good and excellent standards achieved by the department, its schools and services, including details of some of the activities which had been undertaken during the 2015/16 school session and their impact on stakeholders. Following feedback, the format of the report had been revised from previous years to provide a concise, visual and high level summary of progress made towards the local improvement plan.

It was proposed to issue a summary report to all parents with children attending East Renfrewshire schools with copies of the full report going to parents of all pre-school children and being available in all libraries, education, sports and cultural centres and on the Council's website.

Responding to comments from Members regarding sharing experiences of closing the attainment gap and the additional funding being provided by the Scottish Government to improve attainment, the Director of Education, referring to a visit by the Deputy First Minister to the St. Luke's cluster which had taken place last year, advised that the Scottish Government expected East Renfrewshire to support other local authorities to improve attainment gap figures following the successes achieved in this area. She advised that an event had taken place earlier that week to consider the additional funding from the Scottish Government, and a further meeting with Head Teachers would take place next week to discuss how to use this funding. Ways in which the additional funds could be used included employing additional teaching staff or different types of staff such as child development or active schools co-ordinators. Although the funds would be issued directly to Head Teachers, spending would be monitored centrally. Thereafter she advised that reference to the Standards and Quality report could be added to parent newsletters issued by schools.

Having heard a number of Members commend the Education Department on an excellent report and the changes made to the format of the report this year, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the 2015/16 Standards and Quality Report; and
- (b) authorise the Director of Education to take the necessary steps to produce and issue copies of the full report and a summary leaflet for parents, and to make reference to the report in school newsletters, as outlined.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-2020

2369. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Education Department's draft Local Improvement Plan 2017-2020.

The report explained that the plan was designed to give an indication of the department's key areas for improvement over the next three years and was updated annually to take account of changing priorities. Areas of improvement were outlined and priorities would be developed through self-evaluation and information gathered through external evaluations and the implementation of the plan.

Having heard Mr Morris seek clarification on a reference to partnership working contained within the plan, the committee agreed to approve the draft Local Improvement Plan 2017-2020.

PERFORMANCE IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE SCHOOLS IN THE BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION

2370. Councillor Green invited Dr Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) to make a presentation to the committee on performance in East Renfrewshire schools in the broad general education.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) referred to improved results in numeracy and literacy for P1 pupils since 2005/06, advising that the results in both areas had also improved for looked after children, but particularly in terms of literacy. Information was provided on developmental milestones by gender indicating that, although the gender gap had decreased, there was still a significant gap of 14% between the milestones for boys and girls. Performances in reading, writing and maths were rising steadily throughout the primary years and the gender gap was shown to be smaller for maths. Increases in attainment in reading, writing and maths had also been recorded in S3, although some schools required to improve their performance. Schools in East Renfrewshire were taking part in inter-authority partnership working to ensure teacher judgements were comparable. The percentage of children achieving expected levels in reading in P1, P4, P7 & S3 was 84%, well above the national average at 68%, and showed East Renfrewshire as the highest performing local authority in Scotland in this area.

Information was provided on developmental milestones using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation showing that, although deciles 1-3 remained lower than deciles 8-10, significant progress had been made to reduce this gap and an increase of 20% had been recorded in decile 1-3 since 2014/15. Reference was made to the need to track the progress of individual pupils to ensure that they received adequate support and work was being carried out to provide additional support to early years establishments in this area.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) advised that pupil achievements were also very important and pupil involvement in various awards including the Duke of Edinburgh, John Muir and Saltire Awards were recognised, together with their involvement in projects outside school including volunteering and sporting achievements. Exclusion rates remained low and high levels of attendance had been recorded across the local authority with only three schools recording attendance just below the national average.

Responding to comments from Members on partnership arrangements, standards and quality reports, exclusions and the gender gap, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) referred to ongoing partnership arrangements between schools within the local authority and partnerships with other local authorities which benefitted everyone involved, including East Renfrewshire employees. The Director of Education advised that new guidance on reporting was due and would complement the information already provided by schools. She added that benchmarking information had recently improved and welcomed the release of information from comparator authorities on the broad general education.

Referring to exclusions, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) advised that Head Teachers, and the Education Department, would always strive to keep pupils in school if possible by providing appropriate support mechanisms for both pupils and staff. Support could include nurture rooms and additional support staff in primary schools, pupil support bases and behavioural Pupil Support Assistants within the secondary sector and outreach services. Methods of improving attainment in boys included introducing positive role models at an early age by encouraging fathers to become more involved in their child's education from the pre-five stage onwards. In addition, a project was being undertaken within Arthurlie Family Centre and St. Mark's Primary School looking at gender imbalance in literacy.

2204

Having heard Councillor O'Kane thank the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) for an excellent and informative presentation, the committee agreed to note the presentation.

CHAIR