

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 11.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 16 November 2017.

Present:

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

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; 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.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

225. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS 2017

226. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 August 2017 (Page 98, Item 107 refers), when it had been noted that a full presentation, including an examination of the improvement made by pupils in the most disadvantaged groups, 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 2017 against its Virtual Comparator schools highlighting that pupils had once again achieved outstanding S4, S5 and S6 results achieving the best ever results at 5 or more awards at Level 6 in S5, and 1 or more awards at Level 7 in S6. East Renfrewshire schools had performed very well in comparison to their Virtual Comparators and the quality of awards achieved had increased at all stages. He went on to advise that results for all East Renfrewshire young people, and particularly for the lowest performing 20%, had continued to improve year on year over recent years and that young people from the most deprived

backgrounds, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), performed well above comparator groups nationally. These 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 its vision of “*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*”.

Referring to the teacher judgements in the broad general education phase of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Dr Ratter explained that the authority’s schools had also achieved their best ever results at primary and S3 levels. He 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 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.

Councillor Swift, whilst commending the achievements as set out by Dr Ratter, highlighted that the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results showed that performance across Scotland had deteriorated and suggested that the ongoing improvement in SQA results nationally was due, in part, to grade inflation rather than to real improvement in educational outcomes.

In response, Dr Ratter explained that this was very complex situation and that the PISA results could not be easily broken down to provide any meaningful correlation with local performance and SQA results.

Councillor O’Kane, supported by others, suggested that this was a question that should be posed to The Scottish Government, and requested that members focus on the excellent SQA results achieved by the young people of East Renfrewshire.

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, classroom assistants, and school support staff across all levels 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 of these groups spanning P1 to S6. He particularly commended the improvement in the results achieved by students in SIMD deciles 1 to 3.

Councillor Buchanan added his congratulations to all those involved in the achievement of another set of impressive results and made particular mention of the clear evidence that the attainment gap between pupils from the most deprived areas and those from more affluent areas was being closed, a trend which he looked forward to being continued.

Responding to an enquiry from Dr Angell regarding why schools in the island communities of Scotland were not included in the Virtual Comparators against which East Renfrewshire schools were measured, Dr Ratter explained that this was due to the tendency for pupil numbers at island schools to fluctuate considerably year on year and, as a result, The Scottish Government had taken the decision that Virtual Comparator schools would be restricted to those located on the mainland.

Councillor Lafferty commented on the higher level of deprivation in St Luke’s High School compared to Barrhead High School whilst pointing out that St Luke’s consistently outperformed Barrhead High in the SQA results. In response, Dr Ratter, supported by the Director, explained that this was due to the catchment area of St Luke’s High incorporating the Neilston area which, although it contained areas of deprivation, also contained a number

of relatively affluent areas. However he also reiterated the excellent results achieved this year in Barrhead High and expressed the view that this improvement would continue to be seen and future results would improve as this year's S4 students progressed to S5 and S6.

The Director of Education gave the committee a very brief oral update on the Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative highlighting that the proposed governance arrangements would continue to ensure local democratic accountability for education functions and explaining that a report responding to the latest Scottish Government consultation on an Education (Scotland) Bill would be brought to a future meeting for consideration.

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

