

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

**Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 11 March 2021.**

**Present:**

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

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

**Attending:**

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Danny Devlin; Jim McLean; and Colm Merrick.

**Also Attending:**

Christine Downie, Head Teacher, St Luke’s High School; Alasdair McDonald, Head Teacher, Maidenhill Primary School.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1570.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF REMOTE LEARNING**

**1571.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising on remote learning activity in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings, and primary, secondary and special schools in East Renfrewshire.

By way of background, the report explained that from January 2021, following the announcement of further school closures in December 2020 in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the context for learning and teaching in ELC settings and schools moved to remote learning with staff facing the challenge of providing responsive and progressive learning experiences for children/young people attending school/nursery as vulnerable learners/children of keyworkers, as well as those who would be learning remotely during lockdown at home.

It was highlighted that the move to remote learning had not diluted the expectation that schools would deliver high quality (remote) learning to meet the needs of their children and young people and in January and February, Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) had engaged with school leaders to look at the remote learning on offer. The audit tool used, a copy of which accompanied the report as Appendix 1, covered key aspects of the work of ELC settings and schools and identified particular strengths and areas for improvement.

Following the audit, an evaluation report; *How Effective is Our Remote Learning Offer: An Overview of Remote Learning in East Renfrewshire, February 2021* had been produced, a copy of which accompanied the report as Appendix 2.

The evaluation report focussed on 4 key themes, gave further information on the range of activity carried out across ELC settings and schools, identified a number of key strengths which were listed, and made a number of recommendations at departmental, cluster, and ELC and school level.

The committee also received presentations from Alasdair McDonald, Head Teacher, Maidenhill Primary School and Christine Downie, Head Teacher, St Luke's High School respectively on the particular activities taking place in their own establishments.

In the course of the presentations it was explained that while nothing could or would replace face to face interactions of children learning together, a great deal of experience and learning had been gained by establishments during this period of remote learning which would be carried forward into a post-COVID environment. Furthermore, whilst appreciating the overarching guidance and strategic support provided, both Head Teachers were pleased to note the level of autonomy they were provided in order to find the best solutions for their particular establishment and the children within it.

The ability to have live check-in sessions via the internet with pupils was very beneficial and had allowed additional support to be provided where necessary; additionally, the schools had provided pupils with recorded online lessons. Pupils could revisit those lessons provided by their teacher which, through various feedback, they had indicated had been a great asset to their revision.

Virtual playgrounds and experiences had also been established to facilitate interaction between friends and peers as part of the school day.

It was explained that schools had developed tracking tools to monitor engagement with families and identify any additional support that may be required. It was noted that the families who did require additional support would change from week to week, indicating the changing nature of individual circumstances. Focused interventions were provided when issues were identified via that engagement activity.

Quotes from pupils within both learning communities were also provided which outlined aspects of the remote learning package that they felt were most beneficial.

Councillor O’Kane thanked both Head Teachers for their attendance and the very informative and detailed presentations they had provided. It was apparent that a great deal of learning had been taken from the first lockdown which had, evidently, been put into place during the second lockdown period.

Councillor O’Kane and other members of the committee also took the opportunity to express their great admiration and thanks to those working within schools during the COVID-19 situation for their enthusiasm and hard work during what was a very difficult time.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the content of the report and the presentations.

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTING THE ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION MODEL IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE**

**1572.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on progress made in the implementation of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) in East Renfrewshire as part of the 2021 certification process.

The Director of Education explained that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the examination diet for 2021 had been cancelled and replaced by the ACM.

A working group had been established with representation from each high school and an Assessment and Moderation Policy developed. A copy of the policy accompanied the report. The policy had been peer reviewed by another local authority and it was believed that East Renfrewshire’s schools, building on their previous work in 2020, were well placed to implement the ACM and ensure that the work of learners throughout the year was, rightly and fairly, recognised.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report and the clarity it provided for the process in 2021 given the issues that had arisen during the 2020 process at a national level.

Councillor O’Kane noted the synergy in terms of the two reports that had been presented to the committee and the important work being done in schools to both enable learners to continue their learning journey during lockdown but, further, to ensure that they could move on with robust and meaningful qualifications that would stand them in good stead going forward.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the content of the report.

CHAIR

