

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

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 2 February 2023.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)	Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan (*)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Kate Campbell	Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Councillor Colm Merrick (*)	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Owen O'Donnell	Mr Des Morris

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

(\*) indicates remote attendance

**Attending:**

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

**Also Present:**

Gerard Curley, Head Teacher, Neilston Primary School and Madras Family Centre.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**PRESENTATION TO PUPILS IN RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING SQA AWARDS**

**308.** Councillor Anderson made a statement on the outstanding SQA awards attained by many young people in East Renfrewshire. In particular, he highlighted the dedication of the young people, their parents and carers, and school staff in supporting them during the difficult pandemic period, highlighting a number of initiatives carried out in East Renfrewshire's schools to assist young people with their examinations.

It had been intended to present an award to some young people in person, however this had not been possible. Instead, the Chair gave mention to a number of East Renfrewshire young people who had either achieved the highest grade in Scotland or, in some cases, a 100% score in a particular examination.

The committee expressed their congratulations to the young people on their exceptional achievement.

### **PRESENTATION TO FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CLEANING SERVICE IN RECOGNITION OF BEST PERFORMER UK APSE AWARD**

**309.** Councillor Anderson made a statement in recognition of the success of the Facilities Management Cleaning Team who had been recognised by the Association of Public Services Excellence (APSE) as the best performing team in the UK.

Each year, APSE gathered information on all public bodies to benchmark performance across a number of areas. They gave awards to celebrate best practice in particular fields and the Facilities Management Cleaning team, following an extensive review, were so recognised by APSE. APSE would develop a case study of the team's practice to share throughout the UK and members of the team had already been involved in sharing practice with partners across the country.

The team was present and received the congratulations of the committee.

### **EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORTS ON MADRAS FAMILY CENTRE AND NEILSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**310.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the reports produced by Education Scotland following their inspections of Madras Family Centre and Neilston Primary School. It was noted that, as these institutions had the same Head Teacher, the reports were being considered concurrently.

Both inspections had been carried out in October 2022 and Education Scotland had evaluated four quality indicators and provided short reports which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement, both of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) explained that, with respect to the Madras Family Centre, three of the aspects of the work there were found to be good, namely: leadership of change; learning, teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement. Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion had been found to be very good.

The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) went on to explain that, with respect to Neilston Primary School, three of the aspects of the work there were found to be good, namely: leadership of change; teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement. Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion was judged to be very good.

The particular strengths and areas for improvement for each establishment were detailed in the report and action plans had been drafted to address the agreed areas for improvement. The Quality Improvement Service would work closely with the leadership team to support the implementation of those plans.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Madras Family Centre and Neilston Primary School. However, the Quality Improvement Service would revisit the centre and school within 2 years of the date of publication to review the impact of the improvement plans in addressing the agreed areas for improvement and to provide a progress report to parents and carers.

Mr Curley, Head Teacher, thanked the committee for the opportunity to address the meeting and explained that he was very happy with the report, and particularly pleased that the school's strong commitment to inclusion and equity had been recognised. He reflected that the report had been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the entire school community and paid tribute to all of his staff and partners, as well as the pupils, parents and carers, for their contributions.

Having thanked the Head Teacher and his senior management team for a good report, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the contents of the Education Scotland reports on Madras Family Centre and Neilston Primary School; and
- (b) approve the family centre and school's action plans to address the agreed areas for improvement.

## **DRAFT STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2021-2022**

**311.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the proposed contents of the Education Department's annual Standards and Quality Report for school session 2021-2022.

The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) noted that under the terms of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, education authorities had a duty to produce and publish a Local Improvement Plan, which detailed how the authority and its schools and services would continuously improve. A Standards and Quality Report based on the Plan would also be produced, detailing how the authority had sought and achieved improvements in provision.

The draft Standards and Quality Report, a copy of which was attached as an appendix to the report, reflected the three key themes of the Education Department's vision statement, *"Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences"*. It provided evidence of the progress the department, Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools had made in supporting all learners, with particular focus on inequalities of outcome. It also set out the improvements made towards the national priorities as set out in the National Improvement Framework.

A self-evaluation exercise had been undertaken which informed the draft report. It helped to outline the next steps to be taken and fed into the Local Improvement Plan. It also took into consideration the continued challenges, with relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, that had been faced by the people in East Renfrewshire. Despite those challenges, the report highlighted very good and excellent standards and practice achieved by the department, its schools and services.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) outlined the range of methods used to gather data and evidence to produce the report. She also referred to the highlights detailed in the report, including senior phase attainment, vocational achievements and the quality of learning and teaching and assessment in ELC settings and schools

Responding to questions from Councillors Campbell and Wallace regarding anti-bullying measures and recorded instances of bullying, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) pointed out that a trauma informed view was taken of those incidents and supports put in place for both children, with proactive strategies to prevent future bullying behaviour, including consequences for the child carrying out the bullying. Follow up actions involving school psychologists also took place. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) also indicated she was happy to discuss a particular incident that had been raised by Councillor Campbell with her outside of the meeting.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement), in response to a question from Councillor O'Donnell, also explained a range of factors that had influenced attendance decline, particularly with the culture of attendance having been disrupted by lockdown, and less expensive holidays available during term time. She further explained that, in past years, there was no obvious gender trend in terms of attendance and exclusion rates, however the department constantly analysed and reviewed this information, to enable them to continue to target resources where they were most needed. In terms of exclusion, she highlighted that support was considered on an individual basis.

Following a brief discussion where members congratulated the department on the report, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the content of the annual Standards and Quality Report; and
- (b) ask the Director of Education to make any amendments and take the necessary steps to produce and issue copies of the report for stakeholders.

## **DRAFT LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-2026**

**312.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Education Department's draft Local Improvement Plan 2023-2026. A copy of the plan was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) 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 developed through self-evaluation and information gathered through external evaluations and the implementation of the plan. The draft took account of the current national priority areas, including the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and was informed by East Renfrewshire's Community Plan. Cognisance had also been taken of the Fairer East Ren Plan and Locality Plans, the department's contributions to the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2022 – 2023, and the department's strategy Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire.

The Plan had a clear focus on improving outcomes for all learners, in line with the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. The plan also set out how the department would address inequalities of outcome that existed for different equity groups and how it would achieve the priorities associated with the NIF. The timescale for the implementation of the plan was over school sessions 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 and the department would continue to report on progress made with the plan through the annual Standards and Quality Report.

Councillor Pragnell raised an issue where changes in staffing at some schools had made parent engagement difficult, indicating her view that parental engagement was key in

addressing many of the priorities of the plan. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) agreed with this and indicated that a number of strategies and technologies were being employed to improve parental engagement.

Following a discussion on securing further funding to allow the work detailed in the Standards and Quality report to continue, the committee agreed to approve the draft Local Improvement Plan 2023-2026.

### **EDUCATION RESPONSE TO “LET’S TALK SCOTTISH EDUCATION”**

**313.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the contents of the Education Department’s response to the Scottish Government Consultation on the national curriculum, which was attached as appendix 2 to the report.

“Let’s Talk Scottish Education” had launched on 21 September 2022 and was intended to help create a compelling and consensual vision for the future of education in Scotland. A report was scheduled to be published in spring 2023.

Formal consultation had taken place prior to submitting the response and the full range of stakeholders involved and were detailed in appendix 1 of the report.

Having clarified that the response had been submitted, Councillor Wallace raised his concern that there was no mention of critical thinking within the response. However, it was pointed out that there were themes included in the response which would require critical thinking. The Director of Education, in summing up the discussion, noted that critical thinking was one a number of key skills vital to education and that Curriculum for Excellence did expect the development of those skills.

It was further noted that the views of members who had participated in the consultation had been fully reflected within the response.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the contents of the Education Department’s response to the Scottish Government’s Consultation on the national curriculum.

### **EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S CONSULTATION ON THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATION APPEAL COMMITTEES TO THE SCOTTISH TRIBUNALS SERVICE**

**314.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval of the proposed Council response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on the transfer of the functions of education appeal committees to the Scottish Tribunals Service.

It was noted that the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allowed parents/carers of school age children to make a written request for a school place at any school. This request, if refused, could be appealed.

The popularity of East Renfrewshire’s schools meant that the Education Authority received a significant number of school placing request applications, disproportionate to its size as a local authority, with appeals being dealt with locally by an Education Appeals Committee.

The Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014 had created a new two tier structure for devolved tribunals and, as part of that, Education Appeals Committees were listed as one of the tribunals which

would be included. This would see the transfer of appeals hearings from local authorities (at stage 1) and Sheriff Courts (at stage 2) to a similar structured two tier appeal process managed by the Scottish Tribunals Service.

The Scottish Government had published a consultation in November 2022, with a proposal to transfer the appeal committees to the Scottish Tribunals Service as provided for by the 2014 Act. If approved, the process would require secondary legislation to be put in place and was expected to take at least 18 to 24 months to complete.

The consultation had a closing date of 6 February 2023 and a range of stakeholders had been consulted on their views on the proposed changes. This included a cross-party meeting of elected members.

The Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision) highlighted key areas of the response which he felt was robust and reflected the views gathered from stakeholders in the consultation exercise.

Councillor O'Donnell expressed his wish that a particular wording be added to the response relating to how few appeals were overturned following review through the current appeals process. He highlighted the years of experience and understanding of local processes that existed in the current system. The Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision) agreed that this would be a useful inclusion.

There being general support, the committee agreed to approve the Council's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the transfer of the functions of education appeal committees to the Scottish Tribunals Service, with the addition of the additional comments proposed by Councillor O'Donnell.

CHAIR