

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 20 April 2023.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Colm Merrick(*)

Dr Frank Angell
Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Ms Dorothy Graham
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); Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin, Owen O'Donnell and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

408. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

PROMOTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOUR IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE SETTINGS AND SCHOOLS

409. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 3 February 2022 (Page 1770, Item 1879 refers), when the Additional Support for Learning Action Plan, which included an action to update the Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy, was approved, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval of the revised Standard Circular 21 Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in East Renfrewshire Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools. A copy of the updated circular was appended to the report.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the circular had been revised in light of updated policy advice and taking cognisance of current legislation and guidance in the area of support for pupils. The policy included a range of strategies to support staff in schools to recognise the needs of pupils and respond appropriately in order to meet the needs of all learners and ensure successful outcomes including, school nurture provision and authority enhanced nurture base; outreach services; Behaviour Support Strategies (BSS); and solution oriented approaches.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) introduced Kate Sinclair, Head Teacher, Eastwood High School and pupils Adam Fergus and Adam Smith, who provided further information on how their school promoted positive relationships and behaviour.

Ms Sinclair advised that, when she was appointed as Head Teacher two years ago, she had worked closely with parents, pupils and staff to update the vision and values of the school and to create a positive ethos. She had encouraged pupils to become involved in the wider community and extra-curricular activities, and all pupils had access to a pastoral support teacher to provide advice and guidance. During a recent HMIE thematic inspection, the school's adoption of preventative rather than reactive measures had been praised, together with the ongoing partnership working and bespoke supports which had been put in place for pupils who often struggled with mainstream schooling. HMIE had asked the school to develop a case study to be shared with other schools.

Adam Fergus provided further information on his role as a Healthier Minds Champion, providing support to younger pupils, particularly those in S1 who were adjusting to the transition from Primary to Secondary School. Adam Smith had trained as an Anti-Bullying Ambassador and had given talks to pupils and parents about this role and the support provided to everyone in the school community in relation to bullying prevention.

In response to questions, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that consultation on the document had taken place in a number of ways including through questionnaires, focus groups and working groups, and the circular, if approved, would apply to all educational establishments and settings.

Having heard Members welcome the report and thank Kate Sinclair, Adam Fergus and Adam Smith for providing further information on promoting positive relationships and behaviour at Eastwood High School, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the updated Standard Circular Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in East Renfrewshire settings and schools; and
- (b) to request that the Director of Education take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early learning and childcare settings.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON HAZELDENE FAMILY CENTRE

410. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of Hazeldene Family Centre. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in January 2023 and Education Scotland had evaluated four quality indicators and provided a report which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided further information in relation to the inspection process, reporting that an action plan had been developed to address the actions for improvement, and introduced Justin Hardie, Head Teacher, Hazeldene Family Centre, who provided further information on the inspection.

Mr Hardie was pleased that the key strengths of the Centre had been highlighted during the inspection and had affirmed the approach that children's voices were at the heart of the learning environment. He expressed his pride in the children who attended the family centre and referred to the close partnership working with parents and families which was an extremely important part of the Centre's approach to learning. He thanked all staff and partners for their enthusiasm and commitment which had led to such a positive report, adding that staff were well placed to take forward the areas for improvement highlighted. He also thanked the Education Leadership Team and the Education Committee for their continued support and encouragement.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on Hazeldene Family Centre; and
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON CROOKFUR PRIMARY SCHOOL AND FAMILY CENTRE

411. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of Crookfur Primary School and Family Centre. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out in December 2022 and Education Scotland had evaluated two quality indicators and provided a short report which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided further information in relation to the inspection process, reporting that an action plan had been developed to address the actions for improvement, and introduced Sheena McGuigan, Head Teacher, Crookfur Primary School and Family Centre, who provided further information on the inspection.

Ms McGuigan reported that, although the short model inspection had been used on this occasion, she was confident that based on their own self-evaluation the Quality Indicators not included in the inspection were also of a similarly high quality. She was pleased with the content of the report which had highlighted the strong sense of community within the School and Family Centre, and that all staff had played their part in creating a positive and safe learning environment, including catering, office and janitorial staff. She added that, despite the difficulties experienced over the past few years during the Covid-19 pandemic, the children continued to flourish and often exceeded the expected levels of learning. She thanked all school and family centre staff for their ongoing commitment and also thanked the Education Leadership and Quality Improvement teams for their continued support.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on Crookfur Primary School and Family Centre; and

- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

DRAFT HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

412. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the draft Home to School Transport Policy and seeking approval to undertake a non-statutory consultation with stakeholders. A copy of the draft policy was appended to the report.

The Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change) explained that the current policy did not cover the wide range of circumstances which could influence whether school transport was to be provided, and the draft policy sought to streamline existing transport provision, ensuring greater consistency across all schools in East Renfrewshire. Although introduction of the policy did not require a consultation to be undertaken, it was proposed that a non-statutory consultation should be undertaken with relevant stakeholders which would run from 24 April to 19 May 2023. Thereafter, the results would be collated and a further report submitted to the Education Committee on 8 June 2023.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the draft Home to School Transport Policy;
- (b) that the Director of Education proceed with a non-statutory consultation on the draft Home to School Transport policy; and
- (c) to request the Director of Education to report on the non-statutory consultation at the Education Committee on 8 June 2023.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT

413. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services. The report outlined the steps taken to improve the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

The report explained that the Scottish Government had set a transformational agenda for ELC, including the expansion of entitlement to free ELC provision from 600 to 1140 hours. In September 2017, the Education Committee had approved the Council's expansion plan to achieve the targets set.

In March 2020, the Scottish Government delayed the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of ELC available to each child from August 2020. However, in June 2020, following consultation with officers, the Education Committee approved the department's proposal to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of ELC for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020, albeit in limited fashion, and full implementation, which included the provision of food at lunchtime, had been ongoing since August 2021.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) explained that quality was at the heart of funded ELC delivery, East Renfrewshire establishments continued to attain good and very good evaluations which compared favourably nationally, and there had been a steady increase in the percentage of children achieving their developmental milestones within the least affluent communities. She explained that, following lockdown, there had been a significant reversal in the previous reduction in the achievement gap between the most affluent and least affluent which had reached 20%. However, in the following two years the gap had reduced to 14%

and, although the figures had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, recovery was expected to continue.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) further explained that the number of parents wishing to access provision from 9am-3pm each day had increased and provision continued to be monitored to ensure that models could meet the choice and flexibility needs of children and families. To further support this flexibility, it was proposed that Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class would change to a family centre to offer full year provision to families to the west of Newton Mearns and provision would also be expanded in Barrhead and Neilston.

Having heard the Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision) confirm that performance was assessed across a number of measures throughout the year and shared with ELC establishments to identify areas for improvement, the Committee noted the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare.

BEYOND EQUITY: A SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

414. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the development of East Renfrewshire's Social Justice Framework "Beyond Equity: A Social Justice Framework for Education in East Renfrewshire Council and Social Justice Strategy 2023-26. Copies of the framework and strategy were appended to the report.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the framework had been developed to ensure that East Renfrewshire settings and schools were supported in reviewing and developing their approaches to social justice. The framework highlighted three dimensions of social justice and that improvement of the dimensions could be achieved by focussing on a number of key areas including use of resources; learning, teaching and assessment; and curriculum design. A driver diagram had been developed to demonstrate key commitments targeted at improving social justice including improved representation of diverse children, young people, families and staff in the life and work of settings and schools; and reducing barriers which limited the involvement and engagement of specific groups. She advised that much of the social justice information was already available within education settings but this framework would bring everything together in one place to align and make it easier for staff to refer to and use. The framework was accompanied by a Social Justice Strategy which outlined the ways in which the Education Department intended to improve social justice through education over the next three years.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the documents Beyond Equity: A Social Justice Framework for Education in East Renfrewshire Council and Social Justice Strategy 2023-26;
- (b) to approve the key priorities identified in the driver diagram; and
- (c) to request that the Director of Education take appropriate steps to ensure they were implemented in all school and early learning and childcare settings.

