

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 8 June 2023.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Colm Merrick (*)
Councillor Owen O'Donnell

Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)
Dr Frank Angell
Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Ms Dorothy Graham

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); Colin Wright, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Gillian Friel, Head Teacher, Braidbar Primary School and Nursery Class.

Apologies:

Councillor Gordon Wallace and Mr Des Morris.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

475. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON BRAIDBAR PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

476. Members considered a report by the Director of Education on the outcome of the Braidbar Primary School and Nursery Class inspection by a team from Education Scotland in March 2023. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school and nursery class and identified particular strengths and areas for improvement, using the Education Scotland

six-point scale and the self-evaluation frameworks. The full report was attached at Appendix 1, with Appendix 2 detailing the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

During discussion, Members praised the high levels of attainment achieved by the school and nursery and they were generally impressed by the report. The Head Teacher intimated that the success had been possible due to the effective partnerships between children, families and staff and the Committee congratulated the staff and pupils on the outcome of the report. Discussion followed on the areas suggested for improvement and a question was asked as to whether the outcomes set for the school for the future were achievable. In response the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) confirmed they were confident that with the continuation of the joint work between the staff at the school, pupils and parents, then the areas for improvement were attainable. There was also praise for the overall results from the school, particularly since 41% of the student population had English as an additional language.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the contents of the Education Scotland report on Braidbar Primary School and Nursery Class; and
- (b) approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

DRAFT NUMERACY AND MATHEMATICS STRATEGY 2023-26

477. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education which sought elected member approval for the Numeracy and Mathematics Strategy Refresh 2023 - 2026. The National Improvement Framework (NIF), amongst other things, outlined a commitment to ensure that every child and young person achieved the highest standards in literacy and numeracy and that this was in line with East Renfrewshire Council's own focus on the importance of numeracy and mathematics as set out in the Local Improvement Plan 2023-2026, which built on the need to develop life skills in line with good practice.

There was discussion on whether the targets could be achieved, given the pandemic. Whilst the impact of the pandemic was acknowledged, there was a general consensus that we should now be focussing on what that gap looks like and target our energy to address this. The target to eliminate the poverty attainment gap was particularly welcomed and although it was acknowledged that this was an ambitious aim, we have to make sure that the additional resource in terms of PEF and SEF is having an impact. The opportunities for parent participation were discussed, including the introduction of video resources and other mechanisms of support.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that:

- (a) the draft Numeracy and Mathematics Strategy, be approved; and
- (b) the Director of Education report back to the Education Committee on the impact of its implementation.

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

478. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 3 February 2022 (Page 476, Item 412 refers) when it was agreed that the Director of Education would report on the non-statutory consultation on the Home to School Transport Policy, the Committee considered a report by

the Director of Education on the introduction of the new Home to School Transport policy, following the completion of the consultation exercise. It was reported that there had been a good response to the consultation exercise. Appendix 1 contained the online questions, with Appendix 2 the Home to School Transport Policy from June 2023. Information was provided on the legislative basis on which school transport required to be granted, including the distances from home to school. Several aspects were highlighted, including the continuing concern over the length of time pupils spent in vehicles. Elected Members were also informed of specific incidents which had been addressed.

During discussion, Councillor Devlin expressed his concern over the proposed removal of transport from a route in Barrhead from September, which he believed was particularly busy in relation to the constant flow of traffic involved. In response, it was clarified that the health and safety team had advised that this would no longer be required due to a new crossing point which had been installed in the area. However, the Director of Education would ask health and safety colleagues to review this assessment and he would report back to Councillor Devlin in due course.

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the results of the consultation;
- (b) approve the Home to School Transport Policy to apply from the beginning of school session 2023/24; and
- (c) note that the Director of Education would consult with health and safety colleagues regarding the crossing at Lochlibo in Barrhead and provide Councillor Devlin with an update in due course.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON PRESCRIBING THE MINIMUM ANNUAL NUMBER OF LEARNING HOURS

479. The Committee considered a report on the proposed response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the prescription of the minimum annual number of learning hours of school education school pupils should receive each year. The consultation period was due to end on 13th June 2023. The consultation was based on the proposals to set annual minimum learning hours for schools, although there appeared to be a lack of clarity by the Scottish Government over the definition of what constituted a "learning hour". The proposal reduced flexibility within local authorities and could have financial implications for Councils. In conclusion, it was recommended that the Council do not support the proposals. It was also confirmed that Councillor Buchanan, as COSLA representative, had been consulted on the response.

During discussion, it was also pointed out that the Parent Council had expressed concern regarding the Scottish Government proposals. There were also implications on school trips, financial considerations involved and the lack of flexibility for Local Authorities to set their own policies.

Should the proposal be accepted, the Education Committee recommended the following course of action:

- a. any additional financial costs associated with the introduction of the annual minimum learning hours, and any other future changes to the delivery of

education as detailed in the draft response, must be fully funded by the Scottish Government;

- b. greater clarity of the definition of the term 'learning hours' is required in order to incorporate all of the types of activities and events which take place throughout a school day and year in which children and young people will be engaging in their learning;
- c. it should be made clear that learning hours are not only those delivered by registered teachers but also other appropriate support staff;
- d. local authorities should not be expected to ensure the minimum number of learning hours to children by extension of the school year;
- e. the recording of learning hours and requests for exemptions should not be overly bureaucratic and school leaders and local authorities should be trusted to use their professional judgement using provided guidance, to determine learning hours inclusion.

The Committee agreed to note and approve the Education Department's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the prescription of the minimum annual number of learning hours of school education school pupils should receive each year.

CHAIR