

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 13 December 2023**

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**Subject: Strategy for Excellence and Equity****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to ask the Educational Services Committee to approve the Strategy for Excellence and Equity 2023 – 2026; and to provide an update on progress with implementing the service priorities to deliver excellence and equity.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Educational Services Committee is asked to note:
- (a)** the progress made in the past three months with the Strategy for Excellence and Equity;
  - (b)** the service has produced a Strategy for Excellence and Equity (2023-2026) which replaces the Strategy for Attainment and Achievement reported to Committee from 2015 to September 2023; and
  - (c)** the range of external scrutiny and reporting on educational performance and practice;

**3. Background**

- 3.1** In line with the Strategy for Excellence and Equity the Committee receives regular reports on progress against this strategic priority.
- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire has produced a Strategy for Excellence and Equity (2023-2026) developed to reflect the Council's future strategic direction (Appendix 1).
- 3.3** In line with the national expectations local authorities report annually on:
- planning and progress to deliver the National Improvement Framework (NIF) vision, key priorities and twin aims of excellence and equity; and
  - the delivery of the principles of the Strategic Equity Fund (SEF).
- 3.3.1** The Strategy at Appendix 1 incorporates the national expectations for the National Improvement Framework and Strategic Equity Fund; and was submitted to Scottish Government in September 2023.
- 3.4** West Dunbartonshire has a strong record of progress and performance against National Benchmarks and Quality Indicators for excellence and equity. West Dunbartonshire ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of the 32 local authorities for performance with narrowing the attainment gap in the Broad General Education; and in Senior Phase national qualifications ranks 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 32 local authorities for the attainment of our young people versus deprivation.

## **4.0 Main Issues**

**4.1** Local authorities are responsible for the quality of the education services and are subject to regular high level scrutiny and monitoring of performance and capacity of schools to deliver continuous and quality improvement in the education provision.

**4.1.1** The Chief Education Officer, Senior Officers and headteachers are engaged in regular scrutiny meetings with the national agencies about performance, improvement and the capacity of the service to deliver national expectations for improved outcomes for children and young people. These include:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) early years and school inspections;
- Scottish Government monitoring of local authority plans and performance against the National Improvement Framework performance outcomes;
- National Benchmarking local authority education service performance;
- Use and impact of the Strategy Equity Fund on delivery of improved equity outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.

**4.1.2** West Dunbartonshire has robust processes in place to monitor and report on performance with outcomes for excellence and equity. An annual monitoring programme delivers regular reviews and visits by officers to monitor the quality and performance of schools and early learning centres. These visits are then followed up by progress and review visits. To deliver this programme requires sufficient numbers of central staff to monitor the performance and build capacity for improvement in all establishments.

**4.2** The Strategy for Excellence and Equity (2023-2026) aims to build on the improvement programme delivered across all educational establishments 2015- 2023; and includes an improvement plan for 2023-2026 which aims to embed practice identified through research and evaluation as highly effective at delivering excellence and equity in West Dunbartonshire.

**4.3** In the period September to December 2023 our schools engaged in workstreams designed to build capacity in our schools to build on the strong progress and performance of the service.

**4.3.1** As reported to Committee in September 2023 at the start of the academic session officers and the Attainment Advisor worked with schools to set Stretch Aims. The collaborative work with headteachers reviewed school performance with attainment and equity outcomes in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase. All schools were supported to set a prediction for performance by 2026 producing an annual trajectory of performance for each year 2023 to 2026. The submission from schools was used to set local authority stretch aims for attainment and equity which are included at pages 21 - 24 of Appendix 1 to this report. West Dunbartonshire's Stretch Aims whilst set by the local authority are scrutinised by the national agencies.

- 4.3.2 Data Leads Network:** A Data Leads Network started in August 2023. Over the 2023-24 session meetings will focus on the efficient use and interrogation of school data on attainment and equity. Headteachers have been working collaboratively to share best practice in the use of data to plan improvements in attainment and equity.
- 4.3.3 Leading Learning (primary schools):** During the period September to October, 321 staff from 28 primary schools participated in the Visible Learning Programme. In this first phase of work staff completed Mindframe Surveys. Mindframe Surveys gather information regarding teacher mind set about what makes a positive impact on pupils learning. Educators who are aware of 'Mindframes' are more likely to have a positive impact on pupil achievement. In addition to the Mindframe Surveys, the schools undertook a Schools Capabilities Assessment. Feedback from the surveys and assessments will be used to identify areas of strong practice and areas for development in each individual school.
- 4.3.4 Leading the curriculum (secondary schools):** 70 secondary school middle and senior leaders are engaged in a collective leadership programme focussing on how to lead learning approaches and curriculum change to deliver excellence and equity. The programme supports staff to reflect on leading: a shared team approach, impactful learning and teaching and developing strong relational trust. Staff will also learn about effective ways to give feedback to teachers about their practice in learning, teaching and assessment.
- 4.3.5 Maths and Numeracy:** A programme of professional development on teaching for understanding approaches in maths is being delivered to teachers from second level through to national 5. The approaches are based on many years of international research and have proven that children learn best when they have a conceptual understanding of the key skills in number and mathematics. The sessions are being delivered by practitioners who are able to evidence sustained and significant improvement in mathematics attainment. This work aims to support a consistent seamless approach in maths teaching across primary and secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire.
- 4.3.6 Literacy Update:** The Excellence and Equity Coaching and Modelling Officer has worked with staff to develop a new literacy programme for West Dunbartonshire: "Come Read with Me @ WDC" focuses on a three stage teaching model. The first stage "Lets Get Talking" focuses on engaging pupils' thinking and research skills. The "Digging Deeper Stage" involves a mixture of teacher modelled reading (shared reading), guided reading and reciprocal reading. The final stage "Flying Solo" is focused on application of reading skills in different contexts and across the curriculum.
- 4.3.7 1+2 Languages:** 1+2 Languages Coordinators from each school continue to play a role in advancing languages education in West Dunbartonshire, with support from an Education Support Officer. Schools have been supported to conduct evaluation of their languages provision against national expectations. This work reflects the authority commitment to providing a robust and equitable language learning experience for all West Dunbartonshire learners.

**4.3.8 Assessment and Moderation:** All schools have identified Assessment and Moderation Leaders. The Leaders are working collaboratively to review practice and provide professional learning in their schools based on areas identified from staff surveys as needing further development. Baseline and post learning questionnaires indicate that this work has increased the confidence of teachers and has significantly improved levels of understanding about what is effective assessment and moderation.

**4.4 WDC Learner Voice:** Children and young people have been invited to share their opinion about what is going well in schools in WDC in the areas of Well Being, Empowerment and Sustainability. This consultation is part of a wider service review being conducted this year. The survey is attached at Appendix 2. The closing date for submissions is January 2024.

**4.5** Funding from Scottish Government supports the work of the Strategy for Excellence and Equity. A tapered reduction of Strategic Equity Funding was announced in 2022. West Dunbartonshire's allocation of Strategic Equity Fund in 2023/24 is £1,447,779 which is a reduction of £298,018 (-21%) from the previous year's funding allocation; with further annual reductions planned in each financial year up to 2025/26. The Attainment Scotland Fund allocations to West Dunbartonshire are detailed in the table below:

Strategic Equity Funding			
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
£1,745,797	£1,447,779	£1,149,761	£851,743

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** As reported to Council in June 2022 the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding enabled the provision of additional temporary (seconded) funded posts within the education service, partner council services and external providers. The annual (tapered) decrease in funding by 2026 will reduce the number of staff available to deliver in these areas with the seconded staff returning to their substantive posts, and any backfill element will cease.

**5.2** The tapered decrease in funding by 2026 will reduce the number of Strategic Equity Funded posts:

- 2021/22 - 41.5 funded posts
- 2022/23 – 39.0 funded posts
- 2023/24 – 35.0 funded posts
- 2024/25 – 28.0 funded posts
- 2025/26 – 24.07 funded posts

## 6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Since its inception in 2015/16 to March 2024 the Council received £15,834,008 in funding. Table 3 provides the detail of the annual reduction in funding up to 2026:

Table 3:

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
£2,043,815	£1,745,797	£1,447,779	£1,149,761	£851,743
Reduction of £298,018 (-15%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-17%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-21%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-26%)	

## 7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 The reduced funding model could impact negatively on sustained improvement in future academic sessions. However, we will continue to monitor this closely to inform future planning.

## 8. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment was submitted to Committee in March 2022 and identified that the decrease in funding will limit the Education Services' strategic ability to deliver and progress a range of functions within the raising attainment agenda. Scope exists to mitigate the adverse impact on pupils; however this requires adaptations across key service areas through the modification of plans to reflect the reduction in Scottish Government Funding.

## 9. Consultation

- a. Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.

## 10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1 This reports reflects the Council's overarching priority to support our communities to thrive.

Laura Mason  
Chief Education Officer  
November 2023

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**Appendix:**            **1. National Improvement Framework Report**  
                              **2. West Dunbartonshire Pupil Survey**

**Background Papers:**    Equality Impact Assessment – March 2022

**Wards Affected:**    All wards