

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 14 December 2022**

Subject: Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement in West Dunbartonshire

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Educational Services Committee about the increased levels of local and national accountability to deliver improved attainment and a narrowing of the attainment gap by the setting of stretch aims and targets; and update on progress with implementing Educational Services' improvement priorities for attainment and equity.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Educational Services Committee is asked to note that the Committee will be provided with regular update reports advising of progress.

3. Background

- 3.1** In line with the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement the Committee receives regular reports outlining progress against this strategic priority.
- 3.2** The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by Scottish Government in 2015 and set out to accelerate the pace in which Scotland closes the poverty related attainment gap. West Dunbartonshire was one of 9 Challenge Authorities receiving Attainment Scotland Funding since 2015. As a Challenge Authority West Dunbartonshire delivered a successful strategy to raise attainment and narrow the poverty related attainment gap.
- 3.3** As reported to Committee in June 2022 the change from Challenge Authority Funding to Strategic Equity Funding in 2022 has reduced the annual income to West Dunbartonshire Council. The Attainment Challenge allocation to the Council prior to 2022 was £2,043,815 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. The allocation in 2022/23 is £1,745,797 with further annual reductions of £298,018 in each financial year up to 2025/26 so that by that year the allocation to West Dunbartonshire will be £851,743.
- 3.4** West Dunbartonshire implements four Scottish Equity Funded projects: Early Level Play and Learning; Raising Attainment and Narrowing the Gap focusing on literacy and numeracy; Better Well Being Better Learning; and School Improvement Partnerships. The projects aim to improve outcomes for all children and young people (equity) and deliver sustained educational improvement (excellence). An annual progress report providing detail about the long- and short-term impact; and progress of each workstream was

submitted to Scottish Government in September is included at (Appendix 1) to this report.

3.5 As reported to Committee in June and September 2022 the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge published in March 2022, set an expectation that local authorities should identify specific local authority Core Stretch Aims and Core Plus Stretch Aims to improve outcomes for all and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. In September 2022 Stretch Aims were set for the Education Service and submitted to Scottish Government (Appendix 2).

3.5.1 The Core Stretch Aims will be aggregated into a national overview of local authority performance as part of the National Improvement Framework. West Dunbartonshire's Stretch Aims and targets whilst set by the local authority will be scrutinised by the national agencies. Officers are working collaboratively with the national agencies and West Dunbartonshire's schools to monitor progress towards achieving the Core Stretch Aims and Core Plus Stretch Aims to be achieved by December 2023.

4.0 Main Issues

4.1 West Dunbartonshire has benefitted greatly from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding since its inception in 2015 and its associated funding streams which have helped us increase attainment levels and the life chances of young people. The change in Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding from highly targeted funding of 9 Councils, to a new, nationally distributed formula in 2022 is a 58% decrease in funding for West Dunbartonshire Council by 2025/26.

4.2 Stretch Aims and Targets

4.2.1 The national expectation is for Stretch Aims to be both ambitious and achievable within local contexts; and focus on the specific aims which local evidence and data suggest are the priority areas for improvement.

4.2.2 The decrease in Scottish Attainment Challenge funding (2022 - 2026) reduces resource available to provide our children and young people in greatest need with bespoke intensive support and interventions. The reduced funding will impact on the overall capacity of the service to deliver ambitious aims and targets.

4.3 The Strategic Equity Fund is used in West Dunbartonshire to support a wide range of enhanced approaches and interventions designed to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, raise attainment and by 2023 achieve Stretch Aims and Targets.

4.3.1 Dumbarton Academy

Cost of the school day and PEF funding has been used to support our most disadvantaged young people to experience a wide curriculum offer and develop skills for learning, life, and work. This funding has also been used to purchase school uniforms, stationery, and calculators to ensure no young person is disadvantaged in their learning in and out of school. We also provide a breakfast club every morning. There is a good attendance at the

breakfast club and whilst it ensures our young people have breakfast it also enables staff to do a 'wellbeing check in' with our most vulnerable young people prior to the school day starting.

Staff have been appointed as Excellence and Equity leads to provide enhanced support to our most vulnerable young people. The team are currently: providing individual and group work support focusing on building resilience, self-esteem and wellbeing; and leading a group of S6 pupils who are Well Being Ambassadors and Buddies of S1 pupils.

4.3.2 Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

We are currently running a pilot project to support a group of our young people in S3 who have the potential to achieve National 5 qualifications but require support to engage in self study at home. A group of staff mentors meet with the young people on a one-to-one basis to encourage and support them with their independent learning; and give advice on study techniques and exam preparation. Chromebook devices have been provided to any young person in the group with no access to a device at home. Every six weeks the young people engage in meetings with staff to monitor their progress in classes, attendance, home learning and use of online learning.

To support our young people to build resilience, confidence and motivation the Mindset in Education Programme is being delivered by a group of staff trained as Mindset Leads. The Winning Scotland Foundation will visit the school this term to review the impact of the school's 'Mindset' journey on our young people, staff and school culture.

Our young people and staff have worked together to develop the OLSP 'Health and Well Being Award'. To achieve the award our young people, engage in collaborative activities and produce presentations to share their learning about the importance of health and wellbeing. Our Youth Engagement Officer is delivering the 'Pitchin in Programme' to a group of S2 pupils. This 8-week programme aims to improve decision making skills in young people and help them make better life choices encouraging them to build resilience with a focus on making the right choices to avoid putting themselves or others at risk.

4.3.3 Saint Peter the Apostle

A significant focus of our interventions in term 1 and 2 have related to supporting the health and wellbeing of our young people. Our daily breakfast club is open to all young people who enjoy free fruit juice and toasted bagels from 8.15 a.m. There are over 50 lunchtime clubs and activities on offer each week ranging from sport to debating and performing arts. Using PEF funding we have employed an additional counsellor thus significantly reducing referral waiting times for vulnerable young people. Our Social Subjects department is operating a drop-in wellness group to support a group of our most vulnerable young people. Our Modern Languages department is launching a Family Languages Learning group which will involve young people, parents and siblings participating in a range of fun after school language learning activities.

As part of our raising attainment strategy 100 senior phase pupils attended an after school study skills session focusing on planning, time management and preparing for exams. A range of targeted interventions are in place to support young people into positive post school destinations – this involves close partnership working with West Dunbartonshire's Senior Phase Team, Skills Development Scotland, and a range of employers. Our Raising Attainment Principal Teachers are implementing a range of interventions to support learners who live in our most deprived areas. This includes providing bespoke support plans, regular review of progress and enhanced interventions to maximise opportunities for success.

4.3.4 Clydebank High

A programme of supported study has been delivered this term. Our young people were consulted to inform decisions about which aspects of learning they would like support with and on which day(s). To attend sessions our young people, sign up via Ourcloud and timetables are shared with parents/carers to encourage attendance. In addition to this our staff also offer informal “drop in” sessions during their interval and lunchtimes for students who would like some additional support.

Our Raising Attainment Principal Teachers are providing daily ‘check in’ sessions with young people in the senior phase at risk of not achieving their potential. The ‘check in’ provides regular monitoring of wellbeing, attendance, and engagement in study. A mentoring programme is also being offered this session. This is an opportunity for our young people to be paired with a key teacher who can offer one to one advice on study skills, time management, attendance, and wellbeing.

A study café has been established as a safe place at the end of the day for pupils to study and complete homework. Staff are available at the café to provide encouragement and support to the young people who attend. The café was established following consultation with our young people. The consultation highlighted a need to provide a quiet place for study or to do homework in school rather than at home.

4.3.5 Vale of Leven Academy

The ‘Hive Intervention’ provides enhanced support in numeracy, literacy and Health and Wellbeing (HWB) to young people who are not achieving their potential due to social and emotional challenges, low attendance and low levels of engagement. Currently there are 32 S2-3 pupils involved across the 3 interventions (literacy, numeracy and HWB). Baseline assessments have been carried out in term 1 and progress is tracked. The pupils involved have commented that they like the well-resourced space and they like that they have key adults in the school that they trust and can talk to. Parental feedback has been highly positive and there are plans to invite parents / carers in for visits as we did last session.

The Student and Family Engagement Hub (S&FE Hub) comprises two pupil workers and a family worker who are employed by Working 4U and work in partnership with VOLA. The family worker supports families with financial advice, support in accessing benefits / grants and employability support. The pupil workers support groups of young people who experience a variety of

barriers to learning and provide them with intensive support. The individualised sessions provide young people with a safe space where concerns can be discussed, targets can be set, behaviours reviewed, and positive achievements celebrated. The pupil workers regularly engage with parents / carers. The S&FE Hub delivers Health & Wellbeing sessions in partnership with the Hive; nurture Groups; and they are currently planning Equine-Assisted Therapy to take place in November.

4.4 Improvement Framework

4.4.1 The Education Service improvement actions to deliver Stretch Aims feature in the Service Delivery Plan to be monitored at the Education Improvement Board Chaired by the Chief Education Officer.

4.4.2 As reported to Committee in September 2022, the Service Improvement Framework operates an annual programme of quality assurance, monitoring and capacity building to support education leaders to implement a continuous programme of improvement. In the period August to December 2023, 60 school visits were conducted focussing on: attainment; action plans to raise attainment and narrow the gap; quality of learning, teaching and assessment; and quality of school and ELC leadership. The improvement activity whilst co-ordinated by the central team engaged headteachers as collaborative participants in the programme of monitoring and review. (Appendix 3)

4.4.3 Another dimension to the Improvement Framework is monitoring the quality of planning and delivery of outcomes using Pupil Equity Funding (Scottish Government funding devolved directly to schools). A Senior Education Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor monitored the quality of planning and delivery of interventions for equity.

4.5 Education Development

4.5.1 WDC Competencies Framework

The Framework was launched in August 2022 with awareness raising sessions delivered to all senior leaders. A Google Classroom has been produced which displays all the resources from the sessions and the collaborative conversations that took place between staff from across West Dunbartonshire schools. This term we will launch a 'West Dunbartonshire Competencies Forum'. This forum will provide our young people with the opportunity to act as 'Competencies Champions' sharing their knowledge, skills, values and experiences. A WDC Competencies Film Competition will also run, providing opportunity for schools to produce a film to introduce the WDC Competencies to their families and communities.

4.5.2 1+2 Languages

Online professional learning languages courses are being developed to support teachers to gain confidence in teaching another language. Online courses will be available in January 2023. Through increased accessibility we are building a shared understanding of high-quality implementation across West Dunbartonshire.

4.5.3 Sustainability

Partnership work is underway with Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) to provide a range of projects and programmes to promote sustainability both locally and globally. This includes Climate Ready Classrooms programme for primary and secondary schools; the Eco Schools Award; Learning about Forests (LEAF) programme; and Upstream Battle.

4.5.4 Health and Well Being

We are currently in the process of developing a local health and wellbeing survey following the Council's decision to withdraw from the Scottish Government Census. The new survey is being developed in line with those that will be used across the West Partnership. This will ensure we are able to receive comparable data that will in turn help us to support the needs of our children and young people in West Dunbartonshire.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** As reported to Council in February 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 main areas supported through this additionality are early intervention in learning, welfare advice and poverty support, nurturing mental wellbeing, community safety, school and learning community collaboration to improve quality, professional learning and personalised learning pathways. The decreased funding 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** As reported to Council in February 2022 in session 2021/22 the local authority Scottish Attainment Challenge funded 41.5 posts. The new funding model will reduce this number of posts by 42% from 41.5 to 24.07 posts by 2025/2026. In session 2022/23 the Scottish Equity Fund will fund 39.0 posts.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Since its inception in 2015/16 to March 2022 the Council received £12,642,432 in funding. Attainment Challenge allocations to the Council were £2,043,815 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. Funding in 2022/23 is £1,745,797 which is a reduction of £298,018.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The reduced funding model coupled with the current context of increases risk of a negative impact on priorities to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for all learners in our communities.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1** A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and has identified the decrease in funding will limit ELA's strategic ability to deliver and progress a

range of functions within the raising attainment agenda. These include, but are not limited to scrutiny and challenge teams, resources to support out of hours and holiday learning as well as access to wellbeing support for parents. 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.
- b. In response to the revised funding model consultation is being conducted with stakeholders to produce West Dunbartonshire's Scottish Equity Fund plan for 2022-2026.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** This reports reflects the Council's 2017-2022 overarching priority to reduce inequalities for the people of West Dunbartonshire which supports improved outcomes for all learners in our community.

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Appendix:

- 1. 2021-22 SAC West Dunbartonshire - End Year Academic Report 2021-22
- 2. West Dunbartonshire Stretch Aims
- 3. Report on outcome of Visit Programme

Background Papers: Equality Impact Assessment

Wards Affected: All wards

