

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 12 June 2024**

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

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with delivering improved outcomes for attainment and equity; and implementing the service Strategy for Excellence and Equity.

**1.2** This report is for noting.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1** The Educational Services Committee is asked to note:

- (a)** the strong attainment and equity performance of West Dunbartonshire in the Broad General Education against the national performance; and
- (b)** the range of improvement and development work delivered in the service to support improved attainment and a narrowing of the attainment gap.

**3. Background**

**3.1** The Strategy for Excellence and Equity aims to drive ongoing improvement and development across schools and early learning centres.

**3.2** The Strategy supported by Scottish Government Strategic Equity Funding aims to support our children, young people and families to thrive through raised attainment and a narrowing of the poverty related attainment gap.

**3.3** The Education Service Excellence and Equity Board chaired by the Chief Education Officer oversees the strategy's implementation and governs resource allocation. The Board meets twice each term with membership including officers, headteachers and the Attainment Advisor. At the recent board meeting in May members reviewed policy and proposals to strengthen the work of Local Learning Communities in academic session 2024/25.

**3.4** West Dunbartonshire's Strategy for Excellence and Equity has improved outcomes in the Broad General Education with West Dunbartonshire performing well compared to national figures.

**3.5** It is notable that West Dunbartonshire maintains positive year on year progress with attainment and equity outcomes.

**3.6** West Dunbartonshire has been identified as one of the top performing Council's in Scotland at making progress to narrow the attainment gap in literacy and numeracy (combined attainment P1, P4, P7) since 2022.

- 3.7** The Council has maintained a positive school and early learning centre inspection record in the 2023/24 academic session. The positive inspection record demonstrates the Council's commitment to delivering high quality education for children and young people in West Dunbartonshire.
- 3.8** Officers are currently monitoring progress with attainment and equity outcomes at P1,P4,P7 and S3 in all early learning centers and schools. This work precedes the submission of pupil data to the annual Broad General Education attainment census conducted by Scottish Government in June.
- 3.9** A report on West Dunbartonshire's Literacy and Numeracy Attainment in the Broad General Education for academic session 2023/24 will be submitted to the Education Committee in August. This report will provide detail about areas of success and improvement.
- 3.10** Schools and early learning centres have prepared annual standards and quality reports for sharing with stakeholders. The reports fulfill a statutory requirement, provide information about progress made and provide evidence to inform improvement planning. Examples from each sector are included at Appendix 1.

#### **4.0 Main Issues**

##### **4.1 West Dunbartonshire Improvement Framework**

West Dunbartonshire's year on year progress is supported by an effective improvement framework delivered through strong collaboration between officers and schools.

- 4.1.1** In the period February to May officers have worked with headteachers to develop shared strategic improvement priorities and plans for academic session 2024/25. This joint work aims to deliver both excellence and equity. To support delivery a new online improvement planning platform has been developed. The content on the improvement platform aligns with the Council priorities for wellbeing, empowerment and sustainability, the National Improvement Framework Priorities and the service priorities for excellence and equity.
- 4.1.2** All secondary schools participated in attainment reviews during March and April. The reviews closely monitored predictions for this year's senior phase qualifications. The reviews identified areas of strong performance, effective practice and areas for development in the next academic session.
- 4.1.3** The Attainment Review Programme for secondary will be further developed next session with plans to strengthen the approach by involving both senior and middle school leaders next session.
- 4.1.4** A professional learning programme implemented this session for secondary school middle leaders has received very positive feedback. The Collective Leadership programme supports leaders to enhance their practice of leading improvements in learning, teaching and assessment. Plans are underway to

extend the programme to class teachers based on feedback from this year's participants. Additionally in May/ June, all secondary depute head teachers will participate in the programme.

**4.1.5** Almost all primary school teachers and leaders have taken part in the first year of the Visible Learning Programme. This initiative aims to improve teachers' and schools' understanding of how to support all children to make good progress in learning. Year one has focussed on evaluating the impact of current learning, teaching and assessment practice at meeting the learning needs of all children.

**4.1.6** Headteachers are being surveyed to gather feedback about the impact of the Improvement Framework in session 2023/24. A report summarising the findings will be submitted to the Education Excellence and Equity Board.

## **4.2** Excellence and Equity Development Workstreams

**4.2.1 Assessment and Moderation Strategy:** work is underway to publish a dynamic strategy on the education Ourcloud platform enabling practitioners throughout West Dunbartonshire to conveniently access up-to-date and relevant information to support assessment and moderation decisions in Local Learning Communities, schools and classrooms.

**4.2.2 Literacy Strategy:** the next phase of implementing a new approach to reading 'Come Read with Me at WDC' has engaged one primary school in each Local Learning Community in a pilot programme. The approach emphasises metacognition and reciprocal teaching, both of which have been researched and shown to positively impact pupils' progress and attainment. The pilot schools will engage in professional learning, assessment activities and collaborative reviews of learning and teaching using the new approach.

**4.2.3 Maths Strategy:** the Maths / Numeracy Improvement Group has developed new planning pathways for Early, First, and Second Levels, building upon the existing Concrete Pictorial Abstract (CPA) and SEAL (Systematic Enquiry and Active Learning) approaches implemented across West Dunbartonshire schools and early learning centres. These refreshed pathways, known as 'Count with Me in WDC,' will ensure a consistent approach to planning across all WDC establishments.

Looking ahead, an Improvement Group comprised of senior leaders and class teachers from all sectors plans to provide an enhanced programme of professional learning to every establishment's Maths Champion from August to October 2024. Each Maths Champion will deliver professional development within their own school, and the Improvement Group will offer support as required. This provides a sustainable training provision within WDC. Furthermore, funding has been allocated to each secondary school to purchase resources that support delivery of CPA approaches.

**4.2.4 WDC Skills for Learning, Life and Work:** West Dunbartonshire schools are actively embedding the six WDC Competencies: creativity, character, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and citizenship, into learning

and teaching. Project-based learning is central to this approach. By tackling real-world problems across curricular areas, learners are developing these essential skills. Collaboration extends beyond the classroom as schools will work together in Local Learning Communities on joint projects and forge partnerships with the wider local and global community.

**4.2.5 1+2 Languages:** West Dunbartonshire schools maintain their commitment to modern language learning. All schools continue to offer French or Spanish throughout the BGE, upholding local and national policy directives. A significant leap has been made in the number of schools offering a second modern language (L3). An impressive 88% of primary schools now provide L3 opportunities, a substantial increase from the 50% reported in 2022-23. The remaining primary schools are actively developing their L3 programmes, signifying a positive move towards a richer language landscape across West Dunbartonshire.

School visits and 1+2 Coordinator meetings have fostered collaboration within the Local Learning Communities. Collaborative work has resulted in the development of new resources, including reading and writing packs for French and Spanish, alongside outdoor learning and play resources. These initiatives contribute to a more robust programme, promoting the significance of language learning throughout West Dunbartonshire

**4.2.6 Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM):** A collaborative effort between 22 West Dunbartonshire primary schools and the Glasgow Science Centre sparked a passion for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and Learning for Sustainability in 4,350 learners through a series of live science shows focused on renewable energy. "Power Up!" (P1-P4) explored the fundamentals of energy sources and use. Pupils in P5-P7 participated in "Future Fuels," a programme examining different energy sources, including fossil fuels and renewables. This initiative brought STEM education to life for learners in a fun and interactive way, empowering learners with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to a more sustainable world.

### **4.3. Health and Well Being**

**4.3.1 Health & Wellbeing Strategy:** as reported to committee in March, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been refreshed and will be shared with schools in the new academic year. The new strategy will equip our children, young people and families for lifelong wellbeing and will ensure every child has the opportunity to learn and thrive regardless of background, while promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Strategy is in draft format and will be shared at Education Committee in August.

**4.3.2 Lyme Disease Education:** during May, Educational Services raised awareness with all schools and encouraged them to become involved in the Lyme Disease Awareness Campaign. Resources from the Lyme Resource Centre were shared with schools to incorporate into the curriculum in WDC schools.

**4.3.3 Sun Protection Guidelines:** educational establishments were reminded about the Sun Protection Guidelines and to take cognisance of them as the weather gets warmer. Lessons of sun safety were also included with the guidance for establishments to raise awareness with children and young people.

**4.3.4 Swimming Project and Water Safety Education:** the Water Safety Schools Swimming Project was delivered this term in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Leisure and Scottish Swimming. The project offers children the opportunity to attend water safety swimming lessons in the lead up to the summer holidays and has a key focus on water safety as well as encouraging the development of aquatic skills. To compliment this project, learning resources on water safety are being used in all West Dunbartonshire schools during the summer term prior to the summer holidays. Resources can be accessed on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub using the following link: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/water-safety/>

**4.4 Instrumental Music Service:** the second West Dunbartonshire Music Service Solo Performer of the Year competition took place at the end of March in Dumbarton Academy. Sixteen of the most accomplished young musicians from the WDC High Schools participated. The competition was won by guitarist Ronan Toal from OLSP. Ronan will represent West Dunbartonshire at the nationwide Scottish Young Musicians competition, which will be held at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland at the end of May.

225 senior phase pupils have completed the performance part of their SQA music exams supported by our specialist music tutors. The tutors are currently engaged in planning the programme of engagement for next session to provide a blend of whole class activities, group and individual music tuition.

**4.5 Sustainability Strategy:** a working group are in the final phase of producing a new strategy for 2024-2027. Officers are liaising with the Council's Sustainability Officer, Education Scotland, and Keep Scotland Beautiful to develop key performance targets and initiatives.

## **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 Funding from Scottish Government supports the work of the Strategy for Excellence and Equity. The Education Committee will be aware that a tapered reduction of Strategic Equity Funding was announced in 2022 reducing the annual income to West Dunbartonshire; and reducing the capacity of the service to deliver strategic priorities for excellence and equity.

6.2 Since its inception in 2015/16 to March 2024 the Council received £15,834,008 in funding. Please note that in financial year 2024/25 the funding available to West Dunbartonshire will have reduced by 26% compared to 2021/22. Table 6 provides the detail of the annual reduction in funding up to 2026:

Table 6:

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 Current budget constraints and 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 reduce capacity. Scope exists to mitigate impact with the development of the Strategy for Excellence and Equity 2023-2027.

## 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.

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Chief Education Officer  
June 2024

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**Appendix:** **Appendix 1:** Sample of Standard & Quality Reports

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

**Wards Affected:** All wards

