

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 9 June 2021**

Subject: Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement in West Dunbartonshire**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update the Educational Services Committee on activity and progress with regard to implementing West Dunbartonshire's Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Educational Services Committee is recommended to note the progress made in the past three months with the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement in West Dunbartonshire.

3. Background

- 3.1** In line with the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement the Committee receives a regular report outlining progress against this strategic priority.
- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire Council has been devolved Scottish Government's Attainment Challenge funding since 2015. The funding aims to ensure every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed focusing particularly on closing the poverty related attainment gap. In January 2021, Scottish Government announced a continuation of the Attainment Scotland Fund for one more year. The allocation to the Council for 2021/22 is £2,043,815.
- 3.3** In May 2021 West Dunbartonshire Council submitted a mid -year academic report to Scottish Government reporting on progress with the Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams for the period August 2020 to March 2021. In line with Scottish Government guidance West Dunbartonshire's workstreams were adapted to support any COVID related impact, in particular, on those most disadvantaged. As a result of the pandemic almost all of the workstream plans were paused and/or readjusted. The mid year report is included at ([Appendix 1](#)).
- 3.4** At the time of writing this report the Scottish Attainment Challenge Project Plan for session 2021/22 was under development due to be submitted to Scottish Government in mid May. A copy of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Project Plan will be presented to Education Committee in September.

- 3.5** Following a second national lockdown from 26 December 2020, in February 2021 a phased re-opening of schools began. The first phase of this saw the part time return of those senior phase pupils who were required to complete practical course work for SQA Assessment purposes, along with a full time return for all primary one to primary three pupils. The second phase saw the full time return of all primary four to primary seven pupils and all secondary pupils returned on a part time basis. On 19 April 2021 all pupils returned full time to school.

The response of schools across the Council to the second period of school closures between January to March showed strong and effective leadership across all schools. Evident, was a high level of commitment to providing equitable access to quality experiences for children and young people. Staff worked tirelessly and collectively to overcome barriers to engagement of learners in remote learning. A strong culture of collegiality and collaboration allowed staff to share innovative ideas and experiences to best support the remote learning opportunities for children and young people in West Dunbartonshire Council.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 Recovery:** As a result of the disrupted period of learning from March 2020 to March 2021 the improvement strategy for schools is being adapted to encompass a recovery plan and an improvement plan.
- 4.1.1 Resources:** Additional Covid19 recovery funding has been allocated to support schools to recover from the challenges of the last year. The funding aims to mitigate impact on attainment and achievement and to support additional interventions that may be required. Head teachers have flexibility to allocate recovery funding where they identify greatest levels of need in their schools and local learning communities.
- 4.1.2 Interventions:** As reported to Committee in March a programme of tuition is in place for individuals and small groups of children in primary and secondary. Our staff have continued to provide this intensive support for small groups and individuals during April and May. The programme of tuition is delivered outwith core school hours and there are plans to continue provision during the holidays. 5209 hours of tuition have already been provided in the period January to May (2860 hours in primary schools and 2340 hours in secondary schools).
- 4.1.3 Opportunities:** The Chief Education Officer is developing an improvement strategy which will recognise the challenging and unique period of Covid19 plus also offer a unique opportunity for the Service to capitalise on what was learned while operating in a different way because of the pandemic. The first phase of this strategy is to work collaboratively with school leaders to support their recovery and improvement planning.

4.1.4 Planning for Recovery and Improvement: Head teachers are currently developing plans for next academic session focusing on 4 key priorities:

- To improve and support the health and wellbeing of our learners;
- To achieve equity and close the poverty related attainment gap – and help young people to achieve positive destinations beyond school;
- To improve learning, teaching and assessment – including pedagogy and what we teach;
- To build leadership capacity through a self improving system and collaboration.

The school improvement team has engaged in focus sessions with headteachers to review the short and long term impact of COVID; highlight the key areas of success achieved by schools; and identify any lessons learned during the school closure periods. Senior Officers will review individual school plans between May and June 2021. Ongoing monitoring and support for all schools and ELC is planned for the summer term and next session as part of the West Dunbartonshire Improvement Framework.

4.1.5 Digital Inclusion/Learning: The pandemic created an opportunity to build on West Dunbartonshire's digital learning strategy with the period of school closures increasing the demand for technology to support remote online learning. In the period August 2020 to May 2021 the number of digital devices has increased to 8640. This provides a device ratio of almost one device to every 2 children/young people. The Service aims to continue to increase the number of devices to provide one to one device access.

4.2 Attainment and Achievement

4.2.1 Broad General Education Attainment: Since 2016 the Scottish Government has conducted an annual census to survey attainment in Curriculum for Excellence Levels for children at P1, P4, P7 and S3. Subsequently, the Service has provided an annual progress report on attainment in the Broad General Education to Committee in September of each year with the exception of September 2020 due to Scottish Government decision to suspend collection of Achievement of a Level Data due to the exceptional circumstances in 2020. Scottish Government will collect Achievement of a Level (ACEL) Data this year on the census date of Monday, 14 June 2021. This data will provide information on the attainment of all P1, P4, P7 and S3 on this date. This will provide an overview of attainment for this year. Members are asked to note this data may not be comparable to data from previous years due to the school closures in session 2020/21 compared to the years 2016 to 2019.

4.2.2 Senior Phase Assessment and Moderation 2020/21: As a result of the constraints presented by the pandemic, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) have cancelled the national qualifications examination diet for session 2020 /2021. In place of examinations, schools will provide "provisional results to SQA based on demonstrated learner attainment consistent with the

requirements set out in subject-specific guidance”. An extensive programme of school, local authority and national quality assurance and moderation will ensure that assessment judgments are valid, reliable and align with national standards prior to being submitted to SQA by the deadline of 25 June 2021.

In line with guidance from SQA, our plans will ensure that teachers have “the flexibility to assess learners at times and in ways that are appropriate to their needs” thus ensuring that all young people have a fair and equitable opportunity to demonstrate their learning. As a result, young people will have the opportunity to continue undertaking a range of assessments during timetabled classes. Approaches to learning and teaching will continue to ensure that young people have the opportunity to be well prepared for assessments and teachers will share assessment dates directly with students. Further to this, our core provision will be complemented by an extensive Supported Study Programme.

4.3 Summer Programme:

4.3.1 West Dunbartonshire Summer Extravaganza: To support recovery from lockdown, West Dunbartonshire Council is providing a programme of free summer events for children and families. This builds on the provision of free holiday programmes funded by West Dunbartonshire since 2016. This year West Dunbartonshire will provide a ‘Summer Extravaganza’ offering 7,500 free places to over 220 events across 23 local venues. In addition to this, in May Scottish Government announced, funding for Local Authorities to provide a ‘summer play’ programme for those most disadvantaged during lockdown. The allocation to the Council for summer 2021 is £276k. This funding will enable a number of targeted be-spoke programmes of delivery reflecting the aims of ‘summer play’.

4.3.2 Summer Term Showcase: A schools summer event programme is planned for June 2021. Schools will be invited to join in a ‘Picnic in the Playground’ and a ‘WDC Flashmob’ produced by our Dance Development Officer. A support pack of activities and materials are shared on Campus@WDC. A celebration film highlighting the achievements of our staff and pupils is also being produced. This does not incur costs of require supplementary funding.

4.4 Wellbeing and Safety

4.4.1 Water Safety: All schools will deliver lessons in water safety prior to the summer break. The lessons have been produced by the RNLI as part of the West Dunbartonshire [Water Safety Partnership Approach](#). The lessons will be given a high profile as part of the health and well being curriculum.

4.4.2 ‘Smoke Free Play Parks’: Pupils in P5 and S2 took part in a raising awareness poster competition. The competition was run as a partnership project between Educational Services, the Health Improvement Team, Greenspace and Your Community. The winning posters ([Poster 1](#) and [Poster 2](#)) will be displayed in our local playparks to discourage adults from smoking.

The next phase of development is to promote Scotland's Charter for a Tobacco-free Generation which schools can work towards attaining.

4.5 Sharing the Learning

4.5.1 Primary Schools Writing Competition: 400 primary and secondary pupils entered the first ever West Dunbartonshire Competition. Oliver Derrick from St Mary's Primary, Duntocher; Courtney Deveney from St Eunan's Primary School and Olivia Rodgers from St Ronan's Primary School were selected as winners of the competition each winning a £30 voucher.

4.5.2 Leading the Learning: Our staff and pupils continue to make highly effective use of technology to share, communicate and collaborate:

- In Dumbarton Academy information videos were produced by staff to provide detailed information about the process of selecting [course choice](#) for pupils moving from the Broad General Education into Senior Phase: [S3 to S4 option choices](#)
- In Clydebank High School the senior pupils are leading by example in their approach to sharing information producing a guidance [Video](#) on the changes to the exam system.
- Staff in St Ronan's Primary School are developing their teacher leadership of learning through the development of [school writing website](#) where teachers take responsibility for the production of lessons for key stages in the school which all staff can use with their own class.

4.5.3 Good Practice : Kilpatrick Secondary School's partnership work with parents to deliver personalised learner support featured in a [national overview](#) report about remote learning produced by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

4.6 Early learning and Childcare Officers across all providers have participated in outdoor learning training this year. This has led to the production of a key set of principles for outdoor learning in West Dunbartonshire and further developed the use of outdoor space including use of community space. Parents have commented that when their children come home from sessions in our local community parks and facilities their children eat better and sleep better. Parents engaged in partnership activities with our staff report that they have increased confidence in how to engage their children when outdoors. A group of childminders engaged in training have developed a network of support for outdoor learning. Feedback has been really positive: " We are all learning from each other. The children are enjoying meeting up and exploring areas of the park they have never seen before....the children are being more physical in the park, climbing trees and logs....I enjoy linking with the other practitioners it is so helpful ". This is building on existing good practice in the authority. Some examples of the activities taking place are in the attached [video](#)

4.7 Learning for Sustainability

4.7.1 WDC ECO City Project: This session a Virtual Transition Project for P7 has been produced and shared on Campus@WDC. The project called [WDC Eco City 2021](#) provides a series of 6 lessons produced for P7 children focussing on the themes of sustainability, bio diversity, climate change, carbon footprint and air pollution. The lessons provide opportunity for children to build on their existing knowledge and to share their learning virtually with other P7 children within West Dunbartonshire.

4.7.2 Learn and Grow: Since 2017 the Leamy Foundation has worked in schools and communities to deliver the Learn and Grow Project. The project has a 15-year vision to establish an active community food growing and natural heritage resource in every education centre and community in West Dunbartonshire. This project is delivered in partnership with schools and local communities promoting the maintenance of food growing spaces and orchards in the grounds of our schools and early learning centres. To date the project has provided resources and activities to 45 (64%) of our educational establishments.

4.7.3 National Park Family Sessions: Every Wednesday families will be invited to participate in practical hands on biodiversity projects at the National Park. Free transport, lunch and snacks will be provided for families. This weekly offering is part of West Dunbartonshire's Summer Extravaganza Programme.

5. People Implications

5.1 COVID-19 has impacted on all employees and advice from the Scottish Government is followed. It is recognised that whilst continuing to deliver learning within West Dunbartonshire changes to how education is delivered in response to COVID may impact on teaching and support staff who have caring responsibilities, those who have received shielding letters, those isolating, and pregnant employees. Regular advice and guidance is provided to all staff. Senior Leaders adopt a personalised approach taking into consideration the needs of their staff. A solution focused approach is applied to support staff expressing concern about the provision of remote learning.

5.2 Additional funding from Scottish Government since July 2020 has enabled recruitment of additional teaching and support staff to aid education recovery as a result of COVID-19. The allocation to the Council is £1,487,640. This has funded 37.6 teachers and 6 learning assistants. It was agreed through local negotiations to open the recruitment to newly qualified teachers and teachers registered for supply teaching in the authority. This ensured a fair recruitment process with opportunities available to all qualified teachers.

6. Financial Implication and Procurement Implications

6.1 The full award of £2.043m for 2020/21 has been received and was spent. For

Primary Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams we claimed costs of £847,895. For Secondary Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams we claimed costs of £1,195,920.

6.2 To support national recovery planning Scottish Government advised local authorities in April 2020 of flexibility to adjust Scottish Attainment Challenge funded plans. This is recorded in the Service Recovery Plan and reported to committee in September 2020. As a consequence, the Scottish Government has included the Scottish Attainment Challenge grant within its framework for financial flexibilities. Funding has been allocated towards continuing to tackle the attainment gap including resourcing supported study, targeted support and interventions, providing remote learning materials and the development of a virtual hub.

6.3 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 Impact of the ongoing uncertainty and possible service disruption during the pandemic could impact on delivery of strategic outcomes.

7.2 Failure to implement an authority-wide strategy to raise attainment and secure improvement will disadvantage our young people and may become a reputational risk to the Council.

7.3 The Committee will be provided with regular update reports advising of progress

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 The Council recognises the diverse needs of learners, parents, guardians and carers and will ensure language and communication needs are carefully considered and met, and that suitable material and resources are accessible.

8.2 Building on the established provision of professional learning for staff we will ensure all staff are aware of and able to access appropriate training.

8.3 The Council is committed to the health and wellbeing of employees and we will continue to ensure that staff, children and parents are aware of the range of support available from Council Services, including support from psychological services and the measures in place to mitigate any impact on protected groups.

9. Consultation

9.1 In developing these plans there has been consultation with Education Scotland, the Scottish Government, local Trade Unions, parent councils and heads of establishment.

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

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 Strong governance and contingency planning in place for the education recovery plan.

10.2 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. SAC Mid Year Academic Report**

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards