

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer

Educational Services Committee: 28 September 2022

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 progress with implementing Educational Services' improvement priorities for attainment and equity.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Educational Services Committee is asked to:

- 1) note 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
- 2) note plans to support education recovery and improvement in session 2022/ 23 building on the success of West Dunbartonshire's Attainment Strategy delivered in academic session 2021/22.

2.2 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 in each financial year up to 2025/26. Officers have developed an Improvement

Framework, Attainment Action Plan to limit the impact of the reduced funding to West Dunbartonshire between 2022 and 2026.

3.4 As reported to Committee in June 2022 the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge published in March 2022, set an expectation that local authorities should identify specific local authority stretch aims for improving outcomes for all while closing the poverty-related attainment gap. These stretch aims should 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. These at a minimum these should include (core) stretch aims for both overall progress and for reducing the poverty-related gaps in the following:

- achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (literacy combined and numeracy combined);
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 5 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 6 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
- the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and
- a locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets.

Each identified stretch aim should clearly articulate ambitions for progress for all pupils and progress in narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap in 2022/23. Performance will be monitored and reported on nationally.

3.5 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 set stretch aims for West Dunbartonshire to be achieved by December 2023.

3.6 West Dunbartonshire is well placed to achieve stretch aims by 2023 building on the success of the authority Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement launched in 2015 which increased attainment levels and the life chances of young people year on year.

3.7 A newly established Improvement Board chaired by the Chief Education Officer will monitor progress towards stretch aims and targets with regular updates to Education Committee.

3.8 The West Dunbartonshire Education Covid Recovery Plan (as one dimension of the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement) successfully increased educational attainment; and a narrowing of the poverty related attainment gap

in the Broad General Education (P1, P4, P7 and S3) in academic session 2021/2022.

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 to 9 Councils, to a new, nationally distributed formula in 2022 is a 58% decrease in funding for West Dunbartonshire Council by 2025/26.

4.1.1 The service has demonstrated a strong attainment performance at early level and primary in academic session 2021/22. Prior to the pandemic West Dunbartonshire had successfully raised attainment in the senior phase. Early analysis of session 2021/22 SQA performance would suggest a slight dip in attainment and attendance for cohorts of young people in our secondaries compared to last session.

4.1.2 The attendance rates of young people living in our areas most affected by poverty has dipped since pre lockdown. We are also seeing an increase in numbers of referrals to mental health services.

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

4.1.3 To build on the successes of the recovery strategy in session 2021/22 and address areas of challenge the service has strengthened the Education Improvement Framework which aims to provide challenge and support to schools to assist them to achieve ambitious stretch aims and targets for improvement. This strengthening was delayed due to COVID related disruption to education delivery in the period March 2019 to June 2022.

4.2 Improvement Framework

4.2.1 As reported to Committee in June 2022 the local authority has a statutory duty for the quality provision in schools. The Service Improvement Framework has been developed to monitor quality and build capacity for improvement through collaboration between the central officers and schools. The Framework is Appendix 1 to this report.

4.2.2 The Improvement Framework operates an annual programme of quality assurance, monitoring and capacity building to support education leaders to implement a continuous programme of improvement. Officers conduct visits to all schools and Early Learning and Childcare Centres to monitor attainment, attendance, quality of learning, teaching and assessment. A team of 2 Education Officers conduct the programme of visits to all schools with headteachers supporting as part of the visit programme. Officers provide

reports and updates on school performance to ensure all schools are on track to deliver improved outcomes.

4.2.3 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).

4.2.4 As reported to Committee in June, 2022 West Dunbartonshire's schools receive a larger proportion of the Attainment Scotland Fund compared to the local authority. For example, in 2021 the local authority received £ 1,745,797 Strategic Equity Funding; and West Dunbartonshire schools received £3,380,835 Pupil Equity Funding. School performance feeds into the overall local authority performance against national stretch aims and targets. Officers are working closely with schools to ensure high quality delivery and output as a key workstream in the Improvement Framework.

4.2.5 The current economic challenges and residual impact of the pandemic are recognised as risks to the achievement of attainment targets and outcomes. To sustain the gains made to narrow the attainment gap requires a sharp focus on the well being, attendance and engagement of our young people most at risk of missing out. The Chief Education Officer and Senior Officers are working closely with headteachers to monitor use of resource, quality of experience and achievement of improvement outcomes.

4.4 Education Development

4.4.1 Learning Technologies: West Dunbartonshire's commitment since 2015 to the provision of computer devices for children and young people has seen an annual increase with the number of devices purchased almost at a ratio of one device for every one pupil in primary and secondary school:

Year	Purchased	Cumulative Total
August 2015 - 16	2153	2153
August 2016 - 17	857	3010
August 2017 - 18	1423	4433
August 2018 - 19	1158	5591
August 2019 - 20	322	5913
August 2020 - 21	3441	9354
August 2021- May' 22	844	10,198
August 2022	10,198	11,198

4.4.2 Instrumental Music Service (IMS): The WDC IMS Ensembles (Senior and Training Concert Bands, Senior and Training String Ensembles and 'Funk sKool') will resume rehearsals on the week beginning 5th September at the Music service Base in Dalreoch Primary. The pupils will take part in weekly rehearsals and will perform 2 concerts at Clydebank Town Hall. The Christmas Concert will take place on Thursday 8th December and the Spring Concert on Thursday 23rd March 2023. In addition to the authority wide

ensembles, the secondary school ensembles will be given the opportunity to perform at school and community events.

4.4.3 Creative and Cultural Learning Experiences: building on the success of last session's commitment to provide equitable access to cultural experiences for children and young people in West Dunbartonshire a programme is planned for session 2022/23. Examples of events are:

- Scottish Ballet 'Safe to Be Me' (dance) ;
- Theatre in Schools Scotland 'Four Go Wild in Wellies' (dance);
- Theatre in Schools Scotland 'Chalk About' (dance); and
- Travelling Gallery (visual Art) - Partnership with Libraries and Cultural Services.

4.4.4 Languages1 / 2: 1+2 Languages

The national focus on the implementation of the 1+2 Languages policy continues this session. The focus for all our schools is to continue to embed a modern language into learning experiences and provide opportunities for an additional language from P5-7. There is a comprehensive [West Dunbartonshire 1+2 Languages website](#) bringing together all available resources and guidance which will support all schools to further engage with the 1+2 Languages Policy. Free online resources will be developed and shared to promote [family language learning](#) in a friendly and accessible way. All learning and teaching resources are available on Campus@WDC.

4.4.5 West Dunbartonshire Skills Framework

A bespoke [West Dunbartonshire Skills Framework](#) has been developed and was launched. The Framework underpins curriculum planning and enables us to record and celebrate the many achievements of our young people as they progress through school into positive and sustained destinations. The Framework is structured around a set of six competencies: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, citizenship and character. These aim to develop knowledge, skills, attributes and qualifications.

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 well being, 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 will have received £12,642,432 in funding. Attainment Challenge allocations to the Council have been £2,043,815 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. Funding in 2022/23 has been confirmed to be £1,745,797 which is a reduction of £298,018 in 2022/23.

6.2 The Education Recovery Plan at Appendix 1 has been funded from Education's Budget related to COVID flexibilities.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 The reduced funding model coupled with the current context of the pandemic 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. Education Recovery Plan
2. Equalities Impact Assessment Screening

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards