

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer

Educational Services Committee: 10 March 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 Scottish Government's Attainment Challenge funding has been devolved to West Dunbartonshire since 2015. The Scottish Attainment Challenge is about achieving equity in education. The funding aims to ensure every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed focussing particularly on closing the poverty related attainment gap. The allocation for 2020/21 is £2,043,815. In January 2021, Government announced a continuation of the Attainment Scotland Fund for one more year.

3.3 In response to the pandemic Scottish Government advised that there was flexibility to adapt local authority plans for the Scottish Attainment Challenge in session 2020-21. The national Scottish Attainment Challenge reporting cycle and expectations have been adapted to reflect this.

3.4 West Dunbartonshire's Scottish Attainment Challenge plan has been adapted to support any COVID related impact on those most disadvantaged. There are four key priority areas: digital inclusion; fuel poverty/ learning at home poverty; monitoring impact and interventions to support equity gaps.

3.5 In January 2021 West Dunbartonshire schools entered a period of school closures with education provided remotely to most pupils. Children of key workers and children classed as vulnerable can attend in school supported by

teachers and support staff. A policy for remote learning has been produced (**Appendix 1a and 1b**) which brings together key elements of research and information, including online safety to support provision of remote learning in the current context of COVID-19, and provides clear advice and guidance on expectations for remote delivery.

- 3.6** On 2nd February 2021 the Scottish Government announced plans for the youngest pupils to return to school along with the reopening of Early Learning and Childcare Centres (ELCCs). The First Minister outlined proposals for pupils in primary 1 to 3 and ELCC to return to classrooms full-time week beginning 22 February. A small number of senior phase pupils in S4, S5 and S6 will also return to school on a limited basis week beginning 22 February to complete work necessary for their national qualification courses. The proposed plans will be confirmed by the Scottish Government on Tuesday, 16 February, and will proceed if Covid-19 infection numbers continue to decline. The Chief Education Officer has led meetings with headteachers to discuss the plans and begin planning for re-openings.

4. Main Issues

4.1 Remote Learning

- 4.1.1** Remote learning is defined as learning that is directed by teachers and undertaken by children and young people who are not physically with the teacher. West Dunbartonshire schools were in a strong position to provide effective remote learning in January 2021. Remote learning can be delivered in a variety of ways. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating. In the current context, digital and online approaches are commonly used. In West Dunbartonshire the remote online provision is being delivered through West Dunbartonshire's digital learning platforms: [Ourcloud.buzz](#) and the Virtual School [campus@wdc](#). Provision of online remote learning includes: live and recorded lessons; learning assignments and projects; resources and feedback
- 4.1.2** The Service is ready to respond to any changes as determined by national directives and timescales for the re-opening of schools. Senior officers meet on a weekly basis with headteachers to support planning for a prompt response to any changes regarding the provision of education either remotely or in school. In December and January this focused on the provision of remote learning. Focus groups of headteachers are working jointly to share ideas, experience and practice in the following areas:
- managing delivery of learning remotely at home
 - timetabling
 - reporting to parents
 - managing consistency of experience for all children and young people
 - monitoring pupil engagement
 - interventions to support any children and families not engaging in remote learning

- consulting staff, pupils and parents on what's working well and what could be improved

As part of a national review of the quality and effectiveness of remote learning Her Majesty's Inspectorate conducted a review of provision in West Dunbartonshire. They engaged in meetings with Senior Education Officers and headteachers. Following engagement with local authorities a national overview of practice will be published.

4.1.3 Remote Learning Grant: The Service has developed a grant process where parents can apply for funding to support with their energy bills as children are at home all day and to support with providing resources for learning at home; for example, desks for children to have a study space at home. This links to the Council's fuel poverty strategy. The Service is being assisted by the Working 4 U team in the processing of grant applications in accordance with the established policy and process for allocating the Winter Hardship Grant.

4.1.4 Digital Inclusion: Any family with no connectivity at home will be provided with a Mobile WiFi (MIFI) device. The MIFI devices have been delivered to the high schools for distribution within the Local Learning Communities on a needs basis. To date 410 MIFI devices have been delivered. One MIFI device can support multiple Chromebooks within a household. We have over 7000 devices across the learning estate. The increased use of Chromebooks during the remote learning phase requires a device replacement programme for any devices damaged during this period. Provision of funding from Scottish Government is enabling an additional 1700 devices which will supplement the existing stock and assist replacement for any damaged devices.

4.1.5 Free School Meals: Payments were made to all eligible families covering the Christmas holiday period with an extension to cover the period of remote learning from January. For almost all eligible families, payment was made directly into personal bank accounts and for those without a bank account alternative payment means were established. Payments were made to families with children attending our Early Years settings; all children in P1-3 and all eligible families with children in P4-6.

4.2 Attainment and Achievement

4.2.1 Monitoring Impact: The Service has produced a framework to support the evaluation of impact of COVID on attainment, achievement and the poverty related attainment gap in the Broad General Education. Officers are working with headteachers to review areas of improved attainment and areas requiring focussed attention. Schools will use the framework to support the identification of outcomes for their recovery and school improvement planning.

4.2.2 Interventions to mitigate impact: A programme of tuition for individuals and small groups is being provided out of school hours for children in primary and secondary. This is one aspect of the Service recovery strategy to mitigate

impact of the pandemic on learning outcomes. The programme provides intensive support for small groups and individuals. The programme is delivered outwith core school hours and there are plans to continue provision during the holidays. The sessions are led by teachers, support staff and the learning team from Working 4U. The tuition is provided to pupils in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase. Schools were asked to apply for an allocation of hours for remote tuition sessions and across the authority 2150 hours of funding is available for primary schools and 2150 available for secondary schools.

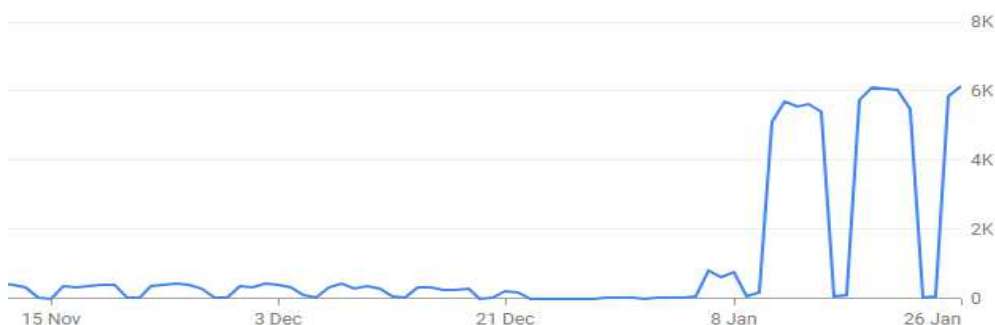
4.2.3 Children and young people requiring additional support to engage in learning due to individual or family circumstances are provided with enhanced levels of direct contact and support from senior leadership teams, support staff and partner agencies. To support equity of experience in remote learning our schools have deployed a range of approaches including:

- Producing learning packs to distribute to families
- Delivering packs/resources to family homes
- Issuing devices to parents and providing on line tutorials for parents on use of Ourcloud and Google platform
- Keeping in regular contact with families
- Providing remote online well being and nurture group sessions
- Counselling sessions for parents and pupils
- Providing opportunities for children to meet in small groups with their friends and/or learning groups

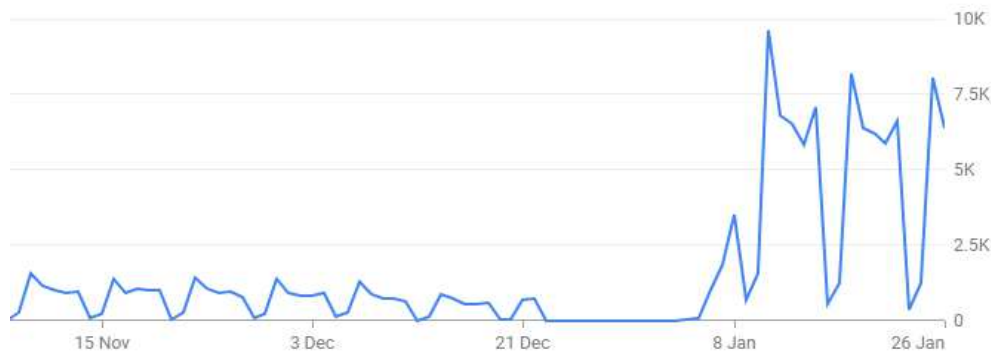
4.3 Monitoring Engagement in Remote Online Learning:

4.3.1 In West Dunbartonshire schools levels of engagement in remote online learning are high. In the first week of remote learning in January 2021, 5000 Google Meets took place; this compares to a daily average of 200 Google Meets at the time of lockdown in March. Since January, 99% of Ourcloud pupil accounts have been logged into. Pupil engagement in learning platforms used by teachers to provide 'live' face to face learning on Google Meet and post learning materials on Google Classroom during the month of January are high:

Daily Google Meet Users:

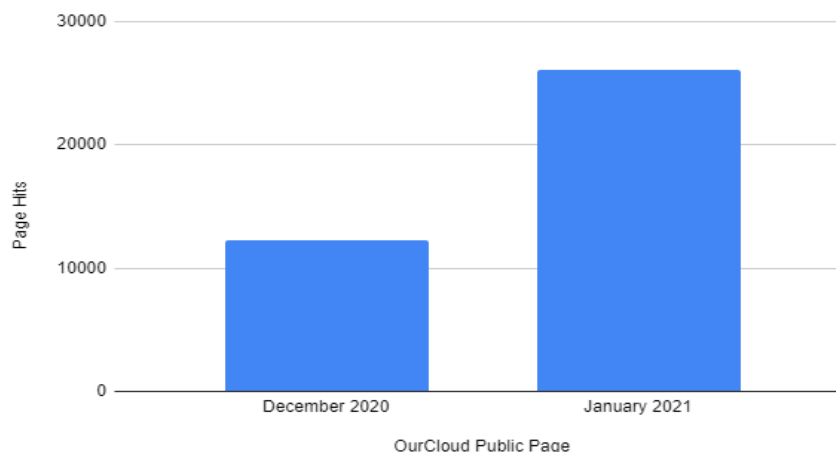


Posts/Assignments on Google Classroom:



4.3.2 The use of the Ourcloud home page accessible by pupils, parents and staff show a large increase in use in the period of January in comparison to December with 25,000 hits on the home page in January :

25,000 Public Ourcloud Hits Since schools returned:



4.3.3 Wellbeing and Safety: Supporting welfare and wellbeing during the period of remote learning remains a key priority for our schools. As with any normal school day, staff are alert to highlighting any safeguarding concerns. Any such concerns are immediately passed to Senior Leadership Teams. It is expected that all children and young people in West Dunbartonshire will be supported through direct contact with teaching and support staff at home and support is also available through the educational psychologist team.

4.4 Sharing the Learning

4.4.1 West Dunbartonshire schools set high expectations for engagement in remote learning by our children and young people encouraging them to engage in the timetabled programme of learning being delivered by every school. Our teachers have been successful in adapting to the change of remote learning incorporating live lessons and recorded lessons to provide the entitlement to

direct learning. Teachers can record their live lessons to allow children who perhaps miss a lesson to access it at a different time. An [example from a primary school](#) is included showing a teacher engage her children in a 'live' face to face literacy lesson. Early years staff have encouraged sharing learning between home/centre using videos and photographs. An [example of home/centre sharing the learning](#) is included.

4.4.2 The closure of schools to the majority of children and young people has generated innovative approaches to communication between staff, young people and families using digital media:

- Clydebank High School produced a [video](#) promoting advice and guidance on key issues for pupils: senior phase qualifications; good study habits and routines; maintaining good mental and physical health. The video features senior pupil leaders conveying and demonstrating their own approach and practice setting a positive example to their peers.
- Vale of Leven Academy used the school's communication channel [VOLATV](#) to share key information on expectations, available supports and ways to access them. Staff from the senior leadership team regularly feature on VOLATV sharing information and expectations in a fast paced, conversational style. In the first week of term BBC Scotland interviewed one of the deputy heads as part of a feature about school closures and the provision of remote learning.
- Kilpatrick School has an established radio channel called [Kilpatrick Radio](#) which features topical news and events produced and featuring the pupils. During the period of remote learning Kilpatrick Radio has been keeping the school community updated with the latest local and national events and information

4.4.3 Senior Phase Options: Normally, at the beginning of February, a Senior Phase Options Evening takes place hosted at West College Scotland. In trying to adhere closely to our usual timetable online versions of the options evenings were delivered in February. A Pupil & Parent event on Google Meet took place on Thursday 4 February with two sessions taking place. This event was supported by our Senior Phase Team, Working4U, and West College Scotland. Invitations were sent out to parents and within three days all 100 places were filled; because of the high demand for places an additional session was arranged. In addition, lunchtime workshops entitled "#WDinspire" were set up using Google Classroom and Google Meet to allow young people to hear from and talk with people who can advise on their future career options and help develop their employability skills. The workshops included a mixture of face-to-face discussions and inspiring video clips. At the end of each workshop, pupils were given the opportunity to request input on anything they wished to find out more about.

4.4.4 Primary Schools Writing Competition: A winter writing competition took place in primary schools between February and March with the winning entry

being selected in April. The competition ran across all schools with children asked to submit a poem, story, letter or diary entry of up to 250 words based on the theme of a winter scene called 'Step into the Painting'. Three winners will be selected to win a prize of a £30 voucher.

4.5 1+2 Languages

National funding for the 1+2 Languages Programme due to end in 2021 has been extended for one more year. This funding launched in 2013 aims to provide learning in languages from the early stages at primary one through the Broad General Education. In West Dunbartonshire the Languages Policy continues to progress. 2021 will see full implementation of the policy. A self-evaluation tool has been produced for schools to review current provision and support the final phase of implementation. To further support family learning, a series of interactive e-books has been developed in [French](#) and [Spanish](#). The first book has been launched and focuses on family mental and physical wellbeing. This book offers a variety of fun and exciting activities designed to develop learner interest in language learning whilst supporting health and wellbeing.

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 including guidance on safe system of work and risk assessments for individuals. Senior Leaders will adopt a personalised approach taking into consideration the needs of their staff. A solution focused approach will be applied to support staff expressing concern about the provision of remote learning.

5.2 Additional funding from Scottish Government enabled recruitment of additional teaching and support staff to aid education recovery as a result of COVID-19. 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 Claims for 2020/21 have been submitted up to December 2020. For Primary Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams we have claimed part year costs of £0.658m. For Secondary Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams we have claimed part year costs of £0.882m.

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 It is anticipated that the full award of £2.043m for 2020/21 will be spent.

6.4 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 implementation of a policy for remote learning provides clear guidance to support effective delivery of remote learning. Whilst remote learning is not a substitute for full time classroom based learning and teaching, effective remote learning can mitigate some of the adverse impacts of a reduction in face-to-face learning. An adaptive approach is required to ensure the entitlement to direct teaching and learning is achieved whilst supportive of the need to adjust to individual and local circumstances.

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

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 The equalities impact assessment identified that remote learning may have an impact on some protected groups. By ensuring that the policy on remote learning explicitly recognises challenges and opportunities and support available there is potential to improve accessibility and provision of enhanced support to children classed as vulnerable.

8.2 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 available to deliver remote learning to all.

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

8.4 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:

- 1a)** Remote Learning Policy
- 1b)** Remote Learning Policy Summary Document
- 2)** EIA – Remote Learning

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards

