

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 2 December 2020**

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:

- (a) 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** Government Attainment Challenge funding has been devolved to West Dunbartonshire since 2015. Funding 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.

- 3.3** In October an Annual Highlights and Challenges Report was submitted to Scottish Government reporting on Scottish Attainment Challenge project progress and budget spend. In recognition of the challenges presented by COVID resultant closure of schools since late March, Government adjusted the normal reporting format for the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The Government asked for a summary of the impact of COVID on plans and actions taken to support children and young people most impacted by deprivation in response to COVID. The report asked for updates where possible on progress against Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams (**Appendix 1**).

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** Short term and long term impact of COVID on mental health and well being of our communities impacting on equity outcomes for our children, young people and families.

- 4.2** Maintaining high rates of progress for attainment and equity at a time of uncertainty and significant change.
- 4.3** Financial impact of COVID on children, families and service delivery.
- 4.4** Attainment Challenge workstreams delivered between September and December have focused on education recovery and resilience response for our schools and local communities. This is in line with national advice.

4.4.1 Excellence and Equity

Officers have engaged in regular dialogue with headteachers to provide support and to identify areas of challenge as a result of the current context of COVID. Focussing on Excellence and Equity senior officers reviewed individual school planning for improvement, recovery and contingency planning. Headteachers on an ongoing basis review the provision for remote and blended learning in their own schools and work collaboratively to share their planning and practice.

All headteachers received training in November on a set of 22 measures developed to evaluate the impact of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in West Dunbartonshire. The evidence from this will feed into local reporting and a national evaluation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge whilst also taking into account the impact of the COVID pandemic on outcomes for children, young people and families.

Strong foundations for supporting our most disadvantaged using pupil support staff, outreach workers, youth workers, teaching staff and community learning, established before the pandemic is enabling early intervention for young people finding the current circumstances challenging to manage at school, home and community. Rigorous monitoring of pupil attendance is also a key priority with education staff and partners working together to support young people to attend.

4.4.2 Well Being

Regular updates are provided to Committee about the provision for well being as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge project work in West Dunbartonshire. In the current context the well-being of pupils and staff is of significant consideration. The importance of safety and the feeling of safety is an important issue being addressed, revisited and acknowledged. To support this, our educational psychologists have been working with our secondary schools to promote nurture practice through the delivery of online nurture group training and collegiate discussions with nurture practitioners. Nurture places emphasis on the importance of putting a child's or young person's emotional wellbeing at the centre of school life and charges the adults that work in schools and early years establishments to focus on developing connections and relationships with children and young people as a means of enhancing their emotional wellbeing. To support younger children a series of lessons focussing on attachment and building confidence have been

produced by our Health Development Officer. Resources promoting creativity to support well being called ‘Mindful Mondays’ and ‘Feel Good Fridays’ are shared weekly for children and families these also include themed home learning activities focusing on seasonal events such as Halloween, Guy Fawkes and Christmas, [Home learning link](#).

4.4.3 Broad General Education Toolkit

To support tracking and monitoring of pupil well being and attainment the West Dunbartonshire Tracking and Monitoring Toolkit has been updated. The toolkit includes a pupil risk analysis for individual pupils, updated termly to ensure that schools have up to date knowledge of the circumstances and factors being experienced by each child. It tracks progress and attainment in all curricular areas including literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. Pupil level data entered into the toolkit includes reading age, spelling age, specific school assessments and national assessment information. A pilot of the updated toolkit was conducted in 10 schools between October and November with roll out to all schools in January. Headteachers use this to review and monitor progress and achievement.

4.4.4 Assessment and Moderation

Since 2017 a national data collection of Achievement of a Level Data in the Broad General Education has been conducted by Government as part of the National Improvement Framework. Due to the pandemic data was not collected this year. Attainment data will be collected for children in primary 1,4,7 and S3 in June 2021. To support this, a programme of training for lead assessment co-ordinators from each school started in November. This training supports teachers to moderate standards of work in their own class, school and across Local Learning Communities to support consistency in the professional judgement of levels of attainment. The training is being delivered by a National Improvement Framework Officer from Education Scotland.

4.4.5 Instrumental Music Service

Pupils have been receiving instrumental lessons using a blended model meaning a mixture of lessons in school and online lessons. Due to COVID brass and woodwind instruments cannot be played in schools. The Service brass and woodwind instructors have used a range of methods to provide tuition including face to face lessons with no instruments used where pupil and instructor will discuss theory, technique, musicality and assess recorded pupil performances. A programme of supported study for pupils studying in the Senior Phase is also being developed for music tuition with the first phase delivered in November. Unfortunately the annual Christmas Concert at Clydebank Town Hall will not take place this year instead a virtual concert is planned involving solo and ensemble performances by primary and secondary pupils.

4.4.6 Project Based Learning Online Professional Learning

At the September Committee information was shared about the provision for remote and virtual learning on [WDC Virtual Campus](#), and the development of project based learning called “West Dunbartonshire Back to the Future 2020”.

The project focusses on the children's experience of lockdown and the 'new' ways of life as a result of COVID focussing on our local, national and global needs supporting learning about Global Goals and learning for sustainability. To support implementation a series of online professional learning sessions were offered in October and November. The course offered support for teachers to develop small-scale projects to deliver within their own establishment and for sharing with the wider learning community. The training offered online and offline elements which participants engaged with at a time that suited them best. Over 70 teachers are in the first cohort trained from across 27 Primary Schools, 15 ELCC and 3 Secondary Schools. Subsequent training sessions were offered to all headteachers in November and will be repeated in January.

4.5 Health and Safety

In partnership with colleagues from Health and Safety a regular programme of advice and guidance sessions for headteachers have taken place providing updates on any new directives; opportunity for case review analysis; sharing good practice and areas of learning. As part of this programme visits have been conducted by officers to schools and ELCC to support and review provision. As part of a national COVID secure spot inspection programme, the Health and Safety Executive visited 7 schools. The visits found no need for formal interventions requiring improvement.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** Scottish Government confirmed that the additional funding for teaching and support staff as part of the national recovery planning is not ring-fenced to a specific group of teachers. It was agreed through local negotiations to open the recruitment to both newly qualified teachers and teachers registered for supply teaching in the authority. This ensured a fair recruitment process with the opportunities available to all qualified teachers.
- 5.2** The Scottish Attainment Challenge funding from Scottish Government has supported the secondment of officers and teachers assigned to raise attainment and narrow the poverty related attainment gap. Exit strategies are being developed for the Scottish Attainment Challenge funded posts in the event that funding ends in March 2021.

6. Financial and Procurement Implication

- 6.1** The first claim for 2021/21 covered the first half of the financial year. For Primary challenge projects we have claimed part year costs of £0.393m. For Secondary challenge projects we have claimed part year costs of £0.713m
- 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 services 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** There was no requirement to undertake an EIA for the purposes of this report as it is providing an update to Committee.

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 report 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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December 2020

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Appendix: Highlight report submitted to Scottish Government

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards