

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Education Officer

Education Services Committee: 6 March 2019

Subject: Online Payments System for Schools

1. Purpose

1.1 This report provides an update for Members on the progress of the pilot and the roll-out of the 'ParentPay' online payments system to schools in the first phase of the project.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- note the progress of the pilot,
- note the implementation of phase one of the main roll out in the Dumbarton and Vale of Leven areas, and
- note the future dates for roll out of the online payments system to schools in the Clydebank area.

3. Background

3.1 In June 2017 Members approved the introduction of an online payments system for schools across West Dunbartonshire. The new system is consistent with the Scottish Government's '*A Digital Strategy for Scotland*' as well as the Council's Digital Strategy and aims to maximise the proportion of digital transactions and reduce the need for cash handling in schools. Committee agreed to also retain the existing mechanisms for payment. This project is part of the Change Board programme, receiving regular scrutiny of progress.

3.2 On 9 March 2018 the ParentPay online payments system was rolled out to four schools. Bonhill, Christie Park, St Ronan's and St Mary's (Alexandria) Primary Schools commenced use of the online system. Due to technical integration issues, it was decided to delay the rollout into secondary schools until the first wider phase of rollout. To date the following percentage of parents have taken advantage of using the system to make payments to their child's school –

Bonhill Primary	96
Christie Park Primary	45
St Mary's Primary (Alexandria)	68
St Ronan's Primary	33

- 3.3** It can be seen from the above table that the take-up rate varies across the 4 schools; however this has significantly reduced the amount of cash being handled in the pilot schools and has drawn favourable comment from both staff and parents. Work continues to communicate the benefits across the pilot schools so parents can fully appreciate the benefits to both themselves and their child's school.
- 3.4** While implementation across the four pilot schools was successful, it did highlight the need for additional support for school office staff, largely from a combination of using new system and the attendant changes to school processes as a result of the new payments system.
- 3.5** In response to this, a Project Support Officer has been seconded for the duration of the project to assist in addressing these implementation issues. This officer will be available to provide general assistance across all schools as well as one-to-one support for staff in the use of the online system where required.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The first phase of the go-live commenced on 22 January 2019 with 7 primary schools commencing their use of the payments system. The following table shows the percentage take-up of the system in the first week across these schools.

St Kessog's Primary	70
Balloch Primary	60
Gartocharn Primary	65
Levenvale Primary	33
St Martin's Primary	46
Renton Primary	20
Lennox Primary	42

- 4.2** Another 7 primary schools will start using the online payments system week commencing 28 January with 3 secondary school going live the following week, this will complete phase 1 of the implementation.
- 4.3** Implementation of the online payments system across schools in the Clydebank Learning Community will take place in January 2020.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** The online payments system is giving staff greater visibility of all payments transactions and will provide more efficient working arrangements for all aspects of financial transactions and school funds management. The pilot highlighted a wider training and support issue in assisting staff based in school offices to move from manual to digital processes.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial and procurement implications associated with this update to Members.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Failure to modernise the processes involved in the handling of school funds poses the risk that the Council will not fulfil the requirements of its Digital Strategy. There are positive benefits arising from these changes as this will provide a more efficient and convenient payment option for parents using methods which are commonplace across a range of public services.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** There are no equalities issues associated with this update to Members.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services and Section 95 Officer have been consulted with on the content of this paper.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The use of an online payments system is consistent with the Council's objectives to make innovative use of information technology and provide efficient and consistent service delivery.

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: EIA screening

Wards Affected: All

