

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer

Educational Services Committee: 1 December 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; and advise of any future changes to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Educational Services Committee is recommended to note the progress made in the past three months with two key priorities:

- 1) The Scottish Attainment Challenge; and
- 2) Education recovery and renewal.

2.2 The Educational Services is asked to note the refreshed national mission and reduced financial distribution model for the Scottish Attainment Challenge from 2022/23.

2.3 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 a regular report outlining progress against this strategic priority.

3.2 West Dunbartonshire Council is one of 9 Challenge Authorities allocated funding from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund since 2015. The Challenge Fund is allocated to those schools and local authorities with the highest concentrations of primary pupils living in multiple deprivation.

3.3 The Challenge Authority Programme set out to accelerate the pace in which Scotland closes the poverty related attainment gap. The funding set out to ensure every child and young person had the same opportunity to succeed focusing particularly on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

- 3.4** 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 £2,043,815m funding 4 West Dunbartonshire Council Scottish Attainment Challenge projects: Early Level Play and Learning; Raising Attainment and Narrowing the Gap focusing on literacy and numeracy; Better Well Being Better Learning; and School Improvement Partnerships. The projects aim to improve outcomes for all children and young people (equity) and deliver sustained educational improvement (excellence).
- 3.5** West Dunbartonshire Council's Scottish Attainment Challenge Project Plan for 2021/22 is on track with a mid year budget forecast submitted to Scottish Government in October predicting full budget spend for the session 2021/22.
- 3.6** In March 2017 Scottish Government introduced Pupil Equity Funding (PEF); allocating funds directly to schools to help close the poverty related attainment gap as another dimension of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Individual school funding is based on Free Meal Entitlement. In 2021/22 West Dunbartonshire schools received £3,797,365m Pupil Equity Funding.
- 3.7** In November 2021 Scottish Government announced a refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge programme. There are three major areas of change: mission, funding, governance/accountability.

Mission

The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge mission:

'To use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty;

By tackling the poverty related attainment gap to deliver on the Government's vision of equity and excellence in education'.

Funding

A tapered redistribution of the £43million of Challenge Authority funding currently distributed to the nine Challenge Authorities to a strategic needs based distribution across all 32 local authorities will be introduced in 2022/23.

PEF funding will continue to be distributed directly to schools and in 2022/23 will continue to be allocated based on Free Meal Entitlement (FME).

Governance / Accountability

Governance of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is under review/revision in three areas: reporting requirements; setting clear ambitions for progress; and creating an accountability framework.

4.0 Main Issues

4.1 The Scottish Attainment Challenge

- 4.1.1** From 2022/23 the new Scottish Attainment Challenge funding model will reduce the annual income to West Dunbartonshire reducing the capacity of

the service to deliver strategic priorities for raised attainment and achievement.

- 4.1.2** Building on achievements made since 2015 the service is developing plans to both accelerate and embed progress in academic session 2021/22 and 2022/23. Plans to support delivery will be reviewed to reflect any changes to the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding and governance model.
- 4.1.3** The continuation of PEF funding directly to schools will increase the level of accountability for delivering outcomes by schools. The local authority is responsible for the quality of education in West Dunbartonshire and will require sufficient capacity to deliver any increased scrutiny and accountability for the delivery of PEF funded outcomes by schools.
- 4.1.4** West Dunbartonshire has a mature and embedded Scottish Attainment Challenge strategy. In session 2021/22 a set of thematic reviews are being conducted by central officers and headteachers to review the Scottish Attainment Challenge projects across early, primary, secondary and specialist settings. The first review took place in November 2021 focussing on the provision of nurture education in primary and secondary schools. The review considered the impact of nurture on children and young people's well being and attainment. A report and recommendations will be submitted to the Chief Education Officer in January 2022.

4.2 COVID Recovery and Renewal

- 4.2.1** In the period September to December the service progressed with the action plans presented to September's Education Committee as part of the Covid recovery and renewal strategy for session 2021/22. Elected members are asked to note that in the period September to October some pausing of plans was necessary to take account of any COVID related pupil and / or staff absence.
- 4.2.2** Working in collaboration with schools and early learning centres central officers have focussed in this period on key workstreams in the areas of attainment, learning, teaching and assessment.

Attainment

Primary headteachers have engaged in a series of professional learning sessions reviewing leadership and management of attainment in literacy in the Broad General Education. The sessions provided opportunity for sharing what works well and developing a shared quality standard for use in all West Dunbartonshire primary schools. The delivery of the shared standard will be monitored by officers at school visits in January to March 2022.

Central Officers have met with all headteachers to review school progress and achievement and identify areas for collaboration and improvement. West Dunbartonshire's Attainment Advisor from Education Scotland is engaged in visits to schools to discuss progress with outcomes for equity. Three

headteachers have been seconded to work alongside central officers to deliver recovery and renewal projects to support improvement.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

A group of primary and secondary teachers are engaged in a West Partnership Programme aimed at supporting on-going professional learning for teachers about high quality learning and teaching. The programme involves attendance at professional learning seminars; being mentored by an experienced deputy headteacher; and delivering a case study project to improve an aspect of learning, teaching and assessment. The participants have engaged in dialogue with their headteachers regarding areas they wish to develop and are now beginning to plan case studies which will be implemented in January / February 2022. Eight experienced West Dunbartonshire deputy headteachers are supporting the programme by acting as mentors for the teachers involved. The mentors are being supported to deliver their role by attending the Delivering Mentorship accreditation programme at Glasgow Caledonia University.

- 4.2.3** The service Improvement Framework developed to monitor quality and standards in all educational settings has been revised as part of the recovery and renewal programme. The Framework provides a model for developing and implementing changes leading to improvement. The revised Improvement Framework is structured around aims, strands and dimensions:

Aims

- Strengthen the impact of our collaborative culture to support delivery of improved attainment and achievement for all children and young people;
- deliver consistently high quality learning experiences which lead to high quality outcomes across all classrooms and establishments; and
- build the capacity for sustained change through the sharing of learning and expertise across improvement partnerships within and outwith West Dunbartonshire.

Strands

- Monitoring and Quality Assurance
- Building Capacity for Improvement

Dimensions

- Collaborative Improvement
- Enhanced Support
- Enhanced Scrutiny and Support
- Leadership Development

The Improvement Framework has been developed by senior officers and is reflective of any national indicators and measures of success and quality. It will be implemented by central officers, headteachers and heads of centres who will work collaboratively to deliver the programme dimensions. This builds on the strong commitment by the service to empowering headteachers and schools.

4.3 Achievement through positive values

In accordance with the Council strategic priorities to achieve independent, empowered and safe communities two contexts for learning have been made priority for all West Dunbartonshire schools:

- Anti- sectarian education; and
- Learning for Sustainability.

These contexts are included as part of the curriculum on offer to promote positive social values in all schools. The social values promoted in West Dunbartonshire Schools are in line with the attributes and capabilities of Curriculum for Excellence the national curriculum for Scottish Schools. The Curriculum for Excellence capacities aspire for young people in Scotland to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

4.3.1 Anti- sectarian education

West Dunbartonshire Council has commissioned an education programme to be offered to all schools between 2021 and the end of 2022. Two organisations will deliver the programme: Show Racism the Red Card and Nil By Mouth. Workshops will be offered to key stages in primary and secondary schools. Headteacher briefing sessions with each organisation are planned for the end of November.

4.3.2 Learning for Sustainability

All West Dunbartonshire schools and early learning centres have developed action plans for COP26 focussing on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These Sustainable Development Goals are part of on-going developments in Learning for Sustainability and support action points in West Dunbartonshire's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan.

In October children and young people posed questions to our local elected members on climate change as part of 'The Moment' on 29th October. 'The Moment' was an opportunity for children and young people across Scotland to engage with their local elected representatives to voice their expectations and wants for their future. Questions about a range of subjects were posed to local elected members by West Dunbartonshire primary and secondary pupils.

Some examples of the questions asked are:

- How can we make car charging units more available?
- What can we do about the shocking amount of clothing wasted each year?
- How can we stop plastic pollution?
- How can we save endangered animals?
- How does the council plan to fulfil the COP26 promises?

The voices of the young people of West Dunbartonshire and responses from local elected representatives were videoed and collated in an online book.

The project was a collaboration between Educational Services and Working 4U.

During the period of COP 26 all schools and early learning centres provided a wide range of experiences to engage and motivate our young people including assemblies, workshops, creative learning and STEM challenges, research and investigations. Examples can be found at [#WDCCOP26](#)

The work of two schools Saint Peter the Apostle and St Eunan's was presented at the COP26 Conference in November as part of a partnership project with Glasgow University. Both schools engaged in a video link with students from Chile to discuss local and international climate issues impacting their lives. The students from Chile presented four local projects they were undertaking to tackle climate change from dealing with odours in landfill sites to the recycling and repurposing of plastic bottles.

The West Dunbartonshire COP26 Programme can be accessed at the [WDC COP26 website](#).

5. People Implications

- 5.1** The new Scottish Attainment Challenge tiered funding approach from 2022/ 23 will reduce the number of staff West Dunbartonshire is able to fund to deliver Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams. Initial scoping of Scottish Attainment Challenge funded posts has identified that the majority are seconded and if there is not sufficient funding they will revert to their substantive posts in line with their terms and conditions of employment.

6. Financial Implication and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** For 2021/22 the Council has been awarded the same sum as received in 2020/21, £2.044m. This is divided broadly as follows: £1.056m to primaries and £0.988m to secondaries. The exact level of funding for 2022/ 23 is still to be confirmed. However, as Scottish Attainment Challenge funding from 2022/ 23 will now be spread across all 32 authorities rather than the 9 Challenge Authorities the allocation to West Dunbartonshire Council will be less than we have been awarded in previous years. However, the Scottish Government have advised that in the first phase of tapered funding across the 32 local authorities mitigations will be put in place to minimise the impact on the 9 Challenge Authorities.

- 6.2** There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Impact of the revised Scottish Attainment Challenge funding model could impact on delivery of strategic outcomes as Scottish Attainment Challenge funded staffing will be reduced. This will be fully clarified when Scottish Government advise local authorities of the detail of the funding from 2022/23 onwards.

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.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening has been carried out and no equality issues have been identified (**Appendix 1**).

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 accessible.

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: Equalities Impact Assessment Screening

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards