

To: Education and Children Policy Board

On: 18 August 2016

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Scottish Attainment Challenge

1. Summary

- 1.1. Renfrewshire Council is committed to ensuring all children get the best start in life. The recommendations of the Tackling Poverty Commission have led to significant investment by the council in seeking to close the poverty attainment gap. This strategy is already well embedded and has focused on evidence based approaches to improving learning and teaching and outcomes for our children.
- 1.2. The Scottish Attainment Challenge was announced by the Scottish Government in 2015. Its focus is to raise attainment for all children and young people and to close the attainment gap between those in the most affluent of backgrounds and those living in the most deprived. Seven local authorities were identified in the first phase of the government's £100m fund over a four year period. The selection of these local authorities was based on the percentage of primary school and children living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. Renfrewshire was not included in this first phase of funding.
- 1.3. In October 2015 there was an extension of the attainment fund to 57 primary schools across Scotland where more than 70% of children were living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. Five schools in Renfrewshire were included in this phase of funding. Each school has an agreed action plan and is making very good progress towards meeting their short term targets.
- 1.4. In June 2016 a further announcement was made which increased the fund to a total of £750m over the next five years and extended the scope to include secondary schools and two further local authorities: East Ayrshire and Renfrewshire. As a result of this announcement a draft action plan is being developed involving a broad range of stakeholders. This will be submitted to Scottish Government for review in the middle of September.
- 1.5. In addition, an innovation fund was established to which Renfrewshire has been successful in securing a total of £275,000 in order to further develop literacy in our schools in the coming academic session.

- 1.6. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the early work undertaken by the five challenge schools in Renfrewshire and to note that proposals are being developed based on the following key themes which are expanded in the background section of this report:
- Ensuring the quality of learning and teaching is central to improvement and professional learning in relation to pedagogy as a key component of these proposals;
 - extending the scope and pace of our literacy development programme in partnership with the University of Strathclyde;
 - developing effective approaches to improving outcomes in numeracy;
 - further improving health and wellbeing through the extension of evidence based programmes in resilience and emotional intelligence;
 - extending approaches to recognising the importance of the family and community in learning; and
 - highlighting the key role played by school leadership in implementing cultural change in education.
- 1.7. A further report will be presented to this board following review of our proposals by the Scottish Government.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The education and children policy board is asked to note:
- the early progress made by the five challenge schools; and
 - that proposals are being developed based on the following key themes:
 - Ensuring the quality of learning and teaching is central to improvement and professional learning in relation to pedagogy as a key component of these proposals;
 - extending the scope and pace of our literacy development programme in partnership with the University of Strathclyde;
 - developing effective approaches to improving outcomes in numeracy;
 - further improving health and wellbeing through the extension of evidence based programmes in resilience and emotional intelligence;
 - extending approaches to recognising the importance of the family and community in learning; and
 - highlighting the key role played by school leadership in implementing cultural change in education;
 - that a further report will be presented to this board following review of proposals by the Scottish Government.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council has a strong track record in ensuring all our children get the best start in life. There is a significant evidence of inclusion, equity, empowerment and social justice across all services.

- 3.2 Three particularly ground breaking approaches highlight this very clearly and provide the basis for our bid as we move forward with the attainment challenge.
- 3.3 The council's early years strategy has demonstrated a clear understanding that children attain better in school when we support the whole child in the context of the whole family. This has been confirmed through external evaluation carried out by Glasgow University. This strategy has been gathering significant interest on a national level and very positive external evaluation.
- 3.4 Secondly, the council established a Tackling Poverty Commission in 2014, where experts were brought together from a range of fields to assess the evidence around poverty in Renfrewshire, and recommend a strategic and coordinated response. The commission was the first of its kind to specifically look at child poverty at a local level in Scotland, and received and continues to receive significant national interest. Following this, the Council made a £6million investment in kick starting the recommendations and this investment forms the basis of our ambitious Tackling Poverty Programme.
- 3.5 Finally, Paisley is bidding to be the UK City of Culture 2021 as part of ambitious plans to use the town's internationally-significant collection of heritage and cultural assets to transform its future. Social regeneration through culture is a significant driver for improvement and provides a very strong commitment to improving the life chances for all our children both in Paisley and the rest of Renfrewshire.
- 3.6 It is the intention of the Scottish Government that schools and local authorities involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge will benefit from greater access to expertise and resources – such as additional teachers, materials for classrooms or resource to develop new out of school activities. National and local partners will work together to identify the specific work that can be implemented successfully in classrooms and which will have a significant impact on the attainment of children from deprived communities. A bespoke improvement plan, appropriate to local circumstances, will be agreed for each school or cluster of schools. This will include an agreement to gather, in a proportionate way, the data that will be required to measure the impact of the interventions supported.

3.7 Challenge Schools

In August 2015, it was announced that five primary schools (with children from SIMD 1 and 2 above 70%) in Renfrewshire would receive Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. The schools identified were Glencoats, St Fergus, St Catherine's, St David's and Gallowhill.

School	% Pupils in SIMD 1&2
Glencoats Primary School	91.8%
Gallowhill Primary School	87.1%
St Fergus' Primary School	83.3%
St David's Primary School	79.7%

- 3.8 Each school is implementing a bespoke improvement plan agreed with the Scottish Government which builds on existing good practice. Within each plan additional resources are being deployed to enhance literacy and numeracy development and parental engagement aspects of the tackling poverty actions. This includes:
- appointment of additional teachers, nursery officers and classroom assistants to enhance teacher 'time on task' with the specific aim of tailored, short –term, small group teaching in literacy and numeracy across the early level;
 - appoint a community learning officer coordinator to enhance parental engagement in language development.
 - develop and extend outdoor learning programmes and nurture approaches to learning;
 - provide staff development in the use of standardised assessments and analysis of data; and
 - provide high quality training and collaborative learning opportunities for early years teachers/ nursery officers in partnership with recognised educational experts and consultants.
- 3.9 Each challenge school has submitted an end of year report to the Scottish Government. These reports highlight the very short timescale within which they have been working. They do, however, highlight the commitment made by each school to ensure their relentless focus on tackling the impact of poverty on attainment.
- 3.10 **Innovation Funding**
In June 2016 we were successful in our bid for innovation funding from the Scottish Attainment Fund. Two projects have been funded for financial year 2016/17.
- 3.11 The first of these is allowing us to continue to build on innovative approaches already making a difference in Renfrewshire as a result of our early years and tackling poverty strategies. We are establishing and extending family learning projects in schools, in partnership with external partners. This project aims to have a positive impact on approximately half of our primary and ASN schools. School projects are focusing on raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing through engagement with families across a range of evidence based projects. Each of these strands is focusing on improving how we support parents to engage with their children's learning both at school and at home.
- 3.12 Our second project aims to address key areas of difficulty that young people from low socio-economic backgrounds face as they move through the early stages of secondary school. This is building on the innovative approaches to literacy development within our tackling poverty strategy. A separate action plan for each secondary school is currently being developed outlining how each school is taking the project forward.

3.13 Tackling Poverty and Challenge Authority Status

Renfrewshire Council has undertaken ground breaking development work through its Tackling Poverty Commission to develop strategies which seek to close the poverty attainment gap for children and young people in Renfrewshire. The partnership with Strathclyde University has been key to this work and the literacy development programme is already showing positive impact for our children.

3.14 Following the announcement by the Scottish Government on 9 June 2016, Renfrewshire Council will now be included in the Scottish attainment challenge and will benefit from additional resources for the next five financial years (including 2016/17). The focus of these resources will be to extend the scope of our existing good practice, raise attainment and to close the poverty attainment gap in primary schools and S1-3 of secondary schools.

3.15 The themes being developed focus on:

- Learning and teaching (literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing);
- Families and communities and
- School leadership.

3.16 It is our intention to continue with our relentless focus on closing the attainment gap and to utilise the opportunity afforded by the attainment challenge to build on this work and to extend the scope and pace of our current priorities. We began this work in advance of most other authorities in Scotland with the ground breaking work of the implementation of our literacy programme in partnership with Strathclyde University. This was initiated by our tackling poverty commission and funded by Renfrewshire Council. We intend to ensure a universal approach across every classroom in Renfrewshire whilst targeting resources and support where they are needed the most.

3.17 Within the primary sector we intend allocating schools into one of four groups for phasing support:

- Our five challenge schools will continue with the targeted approaches already agreed whilst being supported with additional approaches being developed;
- Phase 1 schools (between 10 and 15 schools) will work alongside challenge schools in our first year of implementation (2016/17) to focus on literacy development and gaining a clearer understanding of the leadership challenges being faced by schools;
- In our second year of implementation (2017/18) the phase 2 schools (between 10 and 15 schools) will each be partnered with a school from the first year cohort to further develop approaches and ensure collaboration; and
- As part of our universal approach the remaining schools will be matched to schools already involved to create leadership trios to ensure all children living in deciles 1 and 2 improve outcomes.

3.18 We anticipate that our bid for Secondary Schools will secure additional resources for 9 of the 11 secondary schools due to the percentage and numbers of pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 with consistent universal approaches being taken to support children in the other two schools.

3.19 **Learning and teaching**

We know that the quality of learning and teaching is critical to the success of any approach to improve learning outcomes and closing the gap. The difference in the quality of learning between classes within schools is often greater than the differences between schools. We need staff to believe that they can make a difference. To do this we need to give staff direction, support and time to reflect. Over many years we have invested in supporting high quality professional learning for our workforce. Robust tracking and monitoring of pupil progress is key to ensuring staff are able to plan effectively for improvement. In order to achieve the outcomes we wish to see we will continue to focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching with a specific focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

3.20 *Literacy*

The literacy programme with Strathclyde University is about to move in to its second year of implementation. Our evaluation of year 1 clearly indicates positive impact on three areas: attainment; curriculum and pedagogy; staff development and management. These developments present clear challenges for us if change is to be sustained and become deeply embedded. Actions must maintain the focus, actively promote depth and breadth in implementation, and involve monitoring attainment to evidence cross-authority gains in literacy and progress towards closing the gap. To this end we propose to continue to work in partnership with Strathclyde University in order to further develop the teaching of literacy in both primary and secondary schools.

3.21 Our continued partnership with Strathclyde University will aim to extend the reach of the **primary literacy coaching programme** by providing professional learning for a greatly increased number of teachers in schools with more than 20% of their pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 in the teaching of reading. To ensure a consistent and coherent approach across those schools training of support staff will be included in this programme. Strong collaborative networks of learning that have been established will continue and develop to support full implementation of the literacy programme and increase focused support and challenge discussions with senior management to encourage schools to use teacher-to-teacher learning, to use the coaching and reader response/engagement networks, the video material, classroom visits and head teacher-teacher progress meetings for staff development on literacy. Teachers in schools who have already been involved in the primary literacy coaching programme will be now undertake professional learning in **exploring pedagogy in P1**. This programme aims to continue to support the implementation of interventions that improves reading attainment but also increases the confidence in teachers when planning a literacy rich curriculum for children in P1 and 2. Additional resources and materials will be purchased to support this programme and enhance existing library areas and classroom spaces.

- 3.22 In targeted schools where interventions are showing early indications of impact on raising attainment in reading of our children in SIMD 1 and 2, a programme will be developed to **design a writing curriculum** that makes better bridges with children's lives outside school, that makes teaching more responsive and that results in children who are writers, rather than just children who can write. The ultimate aim is to raise attainment by showing teachers how to teach writing well, whilst showing children that writing can be social, enjoyable as well as a good way to get what you want/need.
- 3.23 Books must never be seen as a teaching scheme for reading. However, we know that children will improve their confidence in reading when they are able to access a broad and culturally rich range of reading material. In addition, we know that it can be very challenging to understand the implications of the cultural and social capital children bring from home. As part of our literacy programme and our City of Culture bid we aspire to both extend the reading resources available to children and to commission local authors to develop an exciting range of accessible and age appropriate texts that will build on the experiences of our children.
- 3.24 We continue to be committed to ensuring the availability of high quality professional learning opportunities for our workforce. A number of primary and secondary teachers have successfully undertaken master level modules with partner universities linked with literacy and numeracy developments. We will continue to support the funding of these opportunities for staff in targeted schools.
- 3.25 *Numeracy*
Currently, all primary schools have been supported through the introduction of a revised numeracy framework in developing strategies to ensure that all children develop high levels of numeracy skills. These numeracy skills are developed through learning across the curriculum and built upon a shared understanding amongst staff of how children and young people progress in numeracy and of good learning and teaching in numeracy.
- 3.26 We are committed to full participation in the national numeracy champion hub initiative that included the numeracy development action plan in their school improvement plan and the nomination of a numeracy champion in each school.
- 3.27 The provision of high quality professional learning opportunities and the support materials have resulted in early signs of positive impact on teachers attitudes and confidence in the implementation of new teaching approaches in numeracy and mathematics. We will review our existing numeracy framework in light of the best research evidence and observations from those schools which are making a significant difference in this area.
- 3.28 We will build on the significant progress made through professional learning and extend this to include (Staged Early Arithmetic Learning (SEAL) training for teachers within the targeted schools.

3.29 *Health and Wellbeing*

As part of our nurturing relationships strategy and in partnership with Barnardo's and Kate Cairns Associates we have successfully developed and implemented the Five to Thrive programme in the early years. There is strong evidence that the programme has had a significant and positive impact on staff, parent and child relationships and a clear indication that parental involvement has increased in our nursery settings. This provides an opportunity to further develop positive parental engagement and ensure sustainable partnerships with parents into the primary school.

- 3.30 Emotional intelligence and resilience are key to a positive attitude to learning. We will provide an opportunity for further investment in equipping children and staff to develop an optimistic outlook on their learning. A number of schools in Renfrewshire have implemented evidence based programmes to promote emotional intelligence and increase resilience in children and young people including PATHs and Bounce Back. The Attainment Challenge offers the opportunity to extend these programmes to all targeted schools.
- 3.31 It is increasingly recognised that a nurturing approach within a school can have a positive impact on relationships and wellbeing and attainment. Links between social and emotional development, wellbeing and attainment are now evidenced (Gutman and Vorhaus 2012, Reynolds, Mackay & Kearney 2009). Renfrewshire's Nurturing Relationships strategy has been developing nurture approaches in educational establishments since 2014. Many schools have nurture classes and have developed nurturing approaches. Every pre 5 establishment has a "nurture champion" and the impact of the approach has been greatly enhanced in partnership with Barnardo's "5 to Thrive" facilitators.
- 3.32 This session, the Educational Psychology Service is leading phase three of the strategy which involves the introduction of "whole school nurture" approaches in two secondary and three primary "pathfinder" schools using an implementation science approach to ensure impact and sustainability. More school will be involved next session.
- 3.33 The Nurturing Relationships strategy is a universal approach which aims to improve outcomes for all children. We intend to extend the initiative and introduce a targeted support element for children and young people living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. The plan is to appoint four teachers to posts of "nurturing attainment coach". These teachers will be part of the attainment challenge team and will work in primary and secondary schools who are developing whole school nurture. Their remit will be to work with staff to improve the attainment of children and young people living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. They will be trained in attachment, nurture and evidence based implementation of social and emotional resilience methods. They will adopt a "coach-consult" model in their work with teachers and groups of staff to support effective learning and teaching with targeted pupils. They will be integral members of the schools nurture implementation core group and will work closely with the educational psychology service. Where appropriate they will be able to support the school to introduce evidence-informed approaches to social and emotional learning and resilience for children and young people living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2.

3.34 Families and Communities

Our experience with our early years strategy has provided very strong evidence of the impact of intervening early with families who are just coping. Having the right support in place for families is vital if we are to ensure positive outcomes for our children. We propose to continue to explore how the work already ongoing in this area can be continued and extended to allow us to embed sustainable models for the future.

3.35 Children who are looked after at home often face particular challenges in relation to attainment. The vast majority of these children live in poverty, often face disjointed educational experiences and very poor attainment outcomes. As a result, we propose specific intervention in relation to this group in partnership with CELCIS.

3.36 Family learning is a key area which schools need to continue to develop. Highly effective work is already being undertaken by community learning and development with programmes such as Pizza Reading. We propose to develop this further in both formal and informal learning settings.

3.37 The cost of the school day programme within tackling poverty has provided a substantial focus for schools to ensure no child is excluded from vital learning opportunities. We propose to continue developing this approach with a clear focus on attainment in our targeted schools.

3.38 School Leadership

High quality school leadership is vital if we are to see the systemic changes we need to see over the coming years. Our whole workforce needs to understand the role that they play in closing the gap. Awareness raising and large scale professional learning opportunities provide a focus for ensuring all our staff understand the role they play in achieving our priorities. This then needs to lead to direct action in all classrooms.

3.39 It has been recognised that part of the challenge for schools relates to the freeing up of time for professional learning and reflection. Our proposals will include an increase in capacity in targeted primary schools in order to allow staff the time they need to collaborate more effectively.

3.40 Our aspiring leaders programme currently provides scope for high quality professional learning for a large number of staff. We wish to extend this to ensure as many as possible are fully involved.

3.41 Following a highly successful development programme aimed at senior leaders within children's services we will develop a programme with head teachers to allow them to consider stepping back to close the gap.

3.42 Measuring Impact

The relationship between poverty and attainment is a complex one. We are developing a range of interventions which aim to extend the scope and pace of our relentless focus on closing the gap. As we do so we have to take cognisance of the fact that no single factor will result in the outcome we are seeking.

- 3.43 It is our intention to model the evidence of impact using a theory of change methodology. We will develop a collaborative model between academic research, data obtained and observation made through engagement with stakeholders. This will, therefore, include evidence which is both quantitative and qualitative in nature.
- 3.44 In order to ensure this model is developed appropriately an initial half day workshop has been facilitated by the University of Strathclyde in partnership with the Research Centre for Learning and teaching at Newcastle University. This will be developed further to ensure a fully comprehensive impact evaluation is carried out across this complex area.
- 3.45 Schools will be expected to have an effective monitoring and tracking system in place for those pupils who live in deprived communities. This will enable class teachers and school leaders to maintain a sharp focus on those children and young people who are at risk of under-achieving and to ensure that resources and strategies are deployed effectively. There will be a specific member of staff in the school who is responsible for this.

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

Significant additional financial resources will be made available to schools in Renfrewshire in order to improve the educational outcomes of children living in SIMD 1 and 2. Details of the financial award will be reported to a future meeting of this board.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

A number of new posts will be created within schools as a result of the additional financial resources being made available. Professional learning a significant and highly important aspect of the Scottish Attainment Challenge proposals being developed .

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

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| Children and Young People | - All children should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued, no matter how much money their parents or carers have. There should be improved educational outcomes for children and young people living in SIMD 1 and 2. |
| Community Care, Health and Well-being | - All children will have access to a nurturing approach which will support their well being needs. The levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families will improve. |
| Empowering our Communities | - Teachers, nursery officers and classroom assistants will have access to high quality professional learning. Parents and communities will be engaged in activities which will support family learning. |

4. **Legal Implications**
None.
5. **Property/Assets Implications**
None.
6. **Information Technology Implications**
None.
7. **Equality and Human Rights Implications**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety Implications**
None.
9. **Procurement Implications**
None.
10. **Risk Implications**
None.
11. **Privacy Impact**
None.

List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1:
The Scottish Attainment Challenge, ECPB 21 January 2016

The foregoing background papers will be retained within children's services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Gordon McKinlay, Head of Schools, 0141 618 7184, gordon.mckinlay@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk.

Children's Services

GMCK/LG

11 August 2016

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