
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 9 June 2022

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Scottish Attainment Challenge Progress and Next Steps

1. Summary

- 1.1. This purpose of this report is to inform the Education and Children's Services Policy Board of the continued progress made in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and to provide an update in relation to the refreshed guidance and framework recently launched by the Scottish Government in March 2022.
- 1.2. Renfrewshire became one of nine challenge authorities in 2016. The overarching aim of the Attainment Challenge is to close the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 1.3. As part of the grant requirements, a bi-annual report is submitted to Scottish Government which outlines progress towards three long-term outcomes. The outcomes are to improve learning and teaching, improve health and well-being and to close the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 1.4. A mid-year report was submitted to the Scottish Government in March 2022 providing a progress update on the programme. The programme continues to provide a range of universal and targeted support. Approaches and interventions have been developed to add value to the work of schools ensuring they are having demonstrable impact on children and young people's attainment, achievements and health and wellbeing.
- 1.5. In March 2022, the Scottish Government launched a revised framework for SAC recognising the importance of collaborative working with wider local authority partners in order to close the poverty related attainment gap.
- 1.6. Over the next four years, the funding for the Attainment Challenge in Renfrewshire will reduce and this has significant implications for the overall delivery of the programme. A three-year plan has been developed to support the sustainability and transition of the programme ensuring that projects are embedded in core work, where possible.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to note the contents of the report.
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3. Background

- 3.1. There are five main work-streams within the Attainment Challenge. These are data analysis, learning and teaching, families and communities, leadership and care experienced children and young people.
- 3.2. This report will summarise the key messages from the Scottish Government mid-year report and provide an update on the next steps for the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
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4. Progress

- 4.1. Patterns of attainment are similar to that of previous years and are summarised below:
- Attainment in P1 has increased across all measures and decreases in overall figures are due to lower P4 figures;
 - Decreases in attainment are largest in SIMD 30% most deprived group and in quartile 2 schools;
 - Listening and talking figures remain consistent across all stages;
 - Attainment in quartile 4 schools has increased across all measures;
 - Comparison to June 2021 figures for P1/P2 and P4/P5 cohorts suggests figures are lower than in June. However, variation in type of data collected and;
 - There were some improvements in 21-22 attendance but this is not a direct comparison to previous years due to schools closures / periods of home learning.
- 4.2. In response to our local equity audit and attainment data, targeted approaches and interventions were developed to support schools with raising attainment and addressing health and wellbeing needs as a result of the pandemic. Some examples of work detailed in the mid-year report are described in this report.
- 4.3. Our team of numeracy Modelling and Coaching Officers (MCOs) engaged with 12 target schools, offering bespoke, in-class support and professional learning activities to develop teachers' knowledge and skills in effective teaching in numeracy and mathematics. The officers are having a direct impact on children as well as staff as described by a Head Teacher:

"The MCO has had a noticeable impact on the way numeracy and maths is being taught...Staff confidence has developed as well as skills...staff are more willing to try out some tasks and activities. [Children] talk more positively about numeracy and maths and what they have learned. In the stages the

MCO is focussing on attainment has increased as November results demonstrated."

- 4.4. The pandemic meant that many children and young people missed out on vital transition visits to their primary or secondary schools. Transition teachers from primary schools supported 90 children ensuring their move to secondary was as seamless as possible. 86% agreed that their transition teacher had helped them settle into high school learning and gave them curricular support when needed.
- 4.5. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. A digital mental health and wellbeing policy for schools was developed and implemented helping schools set out their aims and approaches as well as identifying training needs to support the outcomes of children and young people.
- 4.6. Partnership working has allowed us to strengthen and add value to the work of schools. Active Schools are working with 11 schools to support learning through an after-school physical activity programme. 257 children have participated and benefited by engaging in a variety sport and physical activities which include literacy and numeracy content to support learning:

"In the Active Schools Reading Club we have been focusing on inciting pleasure of reading though implementing Dive into Reading strategies. We worked on comprehension...we discussed vocabulary and how it fits the purpose of the text; we made connections to what we know about the world. But most importantly, we tried to have fun with the text we have been reading"
– Active Schools Coordinator

- 4.7. The Place2Be service is supporting improvements in the emotional wellbeing of children, young people, staff and families. Since August 2021, Place2Be have supported 314 children and young people in targeted schools through 455 drop-in sessions, 191 one-to-one therapeutic counselling sessions, 35 parent partnership sessions and 178 staff Place2Think sessions.

"I like Place2Be because I am able to share my opinions and they don't judge you and they respect it." – Child

"I have been feeling so overwhelmed and felt helpless about how to get help for my son. I am really grateful to Place2Be for supporting him" – Mother

- 4.8. Through our work with Barnardos, 3 schools and 1 Early Learning and Childcare Centre (ELCC) were awarded 'SEL Worldwide Model School' Status for their outstanding commitment to social and emotional learning through their involvement in the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme. The programme continues to have a positive impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of primary school children.
- 4.9. In line with national guidance, schools continued to use their Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in a flexible way and responded directly to the emerging needs of children and young people. Schools utilised PEF to provide targeted support in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Some effective uses of PEF included supporting enhanced transition of pupils from associated primaries, delivering professional learning for teachers and support staff to support the implementation of effective curriculum interventions and providing

targeted support for groups of young people at risk of disengaging from education through nurturing approaches.

- 4.10. Cost of the School Day (COSD) was also used flexibly to directly support families. The majority of COSD funding was used to purchase uniforms and winter / outdoor clothing for children. This was particularly important due to increased ventilation and outdoor play requirements in schools throughout the pandemic. Families also received food vouchers and financial support with utility bills to help alleviate food and fuel poverty.
- 4.11. Through COSD funding, 9 schools took part in a participatory budgeting (PB) pilot. Schools were encouraged to work in collaboration with each other and include wider community partners. Projects focused on gender equality, food poverty, outdoor learning, nurture and family learning. Guidance, advice and support was provided by the Community Empowerment Lead in the Chief Executive's department to take forward PB approaches. As a result, children have developed a range of skills in decision making, negotiating, planning and leadership. Senior pupils have been able to gain experience of working with younger children which has supported their applications to further and higher education.
- 4.12. In March 2022, the Scottish Government published a revised mission statement for the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and all local authorities will receive funding to close the poverty related attainment gap. The refreshed mission is cognisant of the role that partners play in closing the gap ensuring that all children are able to learn, achieve and attain. This also includes an enhanced focus on collaborative working with local poverty action groups and community planning partners.
- 4.13. To strengthen the collaborative approach to planning, discussion have taken place with other services and colleagues in relation to cross-cutting themes and opportunities for joint working / reporting. There are clear links to the Fairer Renfrewshire portfolio and there is much scope to enhance the impact of similar activity and reduce duplication.
- 4.14. The SAC 22/23 offer will be responsive to the needs of schools and wider communities. The offer will include a range of targeted and universal support to enhance literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing, families and communities and leadership. There will be continued funding for care experienced children and young people and this funding will be integrated with planning related to the Promise. The SAC offer will be delivered in partnership with schools and wider partners to ensure that there is no poverty of ambition for children and young people in Renfrewshire.

Implications of this report

1. **Financial**
None.
2. **HR and Organisational Development**
None.
3. **Community/Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is fair	- <i>The appendix details a range of activities which reflect local community planning themes</i>
Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all	- <i>The appendix details a range of activities which reflect local community planning themes</i>
Working together to improve outcomes	- <i>The appendix details a range of activities which reflect local community planning themes</i>

4. Legal
None.

5. Property/Assets
None.

6. Information Technology
None.

7. Equality and Human Rights

- (a) 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 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
None.

9. Procurement
None.

10. Risk
None.

11. Privacy Impact
None.

12. Cosla Policy Position
Not applicable.

13. Climate Risk
None.

List of Background Papers

(a) Background Paper 1: None.

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 Lauren Johnston, Project Manager, 0141 618 4023, lauren.johnstone@renfrewshire.gov.uk.

Children's Services

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