

ADVANCING EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE



Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

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Foreword by Convener for Education and Equalities, Councillor Elaine Green

We are rightly proud of the history we have in education in East Renfrewshire. Since the inception of the Council in 1996, we have always strived to raise attainment and achievement for all of our children and young people. In this document you will see that we are indeed improving outcomes and closing the gap between the most deprived and advantaged learners. However, we can still do more.

As elected members we often ask how different groups of learners are doing. We have taken decisions to support schools to improve attainment of the lowest performing 20% of East Renfrewshire's children and we can see and have heard about how that additional funding has been used to have an impact, but we know there are still groups of learners who need more help to reach their potential. Whether they have barriers because of a specific learning need, English is an additional language for them, or indeed if they are living with poverty, we want to see them having more opportunities and support to help them experience the sense of achievement which other learners have but don't need to overcome such hurdles.

These are difficult times financially for local government, but unless we take decisions to use the resources we have to increase attainment and improve achievement for those who need and deserve better outcomes, we will not be doing what we have been elected to do – make a difference for the local people of East Renfrewshire. Your Council, Your Future is our vision for the Council and this strategy will contribute to securing a better future for our pupils.

In my role as Convener for Education and Equalities, I am in the privileged position of overseeing the improvements we have made and I wholeheartedly endorse Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire and ask everyone involved to continue to work to ensure its implementation to bring about the equality in outcomes which we are seeking to achieve for all our children and young people.

Councillor Elaine Green
Convener for Education and Equalities



Introduction

East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) is fully committed to education and to securing positive outcomes for all children, young people and adults. ERC's vision statement, *Your Council - Striving to be the best we can be to deliver a better future for all*, reflects that commitment.

Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences is the Education Department's vision statement. The statement signals the department's ambition for all children, young people and adults who use the education service. *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* is also a clear statement of intent, which places a responsibility on everyone who works in the service to meet the needs and aspirations of all of our stakeholders, ensuring that they have the skills, capabilities and drive to be successful learners who contribute economically and socially to their communities. The paper, which complements the department's Local Improvement Plan (LIP), elaborates on the vision statement, describing the experiences and outcomes we wish for our learners and setting out the key steps we must take together to translate the vision into reality.

Drawing on sound research evidence, national education policy and our own local intelligence, the paper focuses on achieving excellence and equity of educational opportunity for all. Recognising the impressive standard of education in East Renfrewshire which has been sustained over many years, it sets an ambitious agenda to raise the bar even further so that we achieve excellence in every aspect of the service we provide. The paper also challenges all who work in the service to be guided, and indeed bound, by equity so that we do everything we can to improve the life chances of children and young people who experience the greatest disadvantage in their lives. In short, achieving excellent outcomes must be our ambition for everyone.



Education in East Renfrewshire – Now and the Future

Education in East Renfrewshire gives us many reasons to be proud. Attainment, when measured by performance in national examinations, is at its highest ever level. Our learners also achieve well in the broader sense and enjoy a wide range of opportunities and experiences which help them to do so. Internal and external quality assurance systems confirm that the quality of learning and teaching in our educational establishments is very good and continues to improve, and that almost all learners’ needs are very well met. Overall, the leadership of our schools is excellent and is focused on getting it right for every child. We have parents who are supportive of their children and are keen to be engaged in their learning. We have many successful partnerships with colleges, training providers, third sector organisations and other Council departments and these have enhanced the experiences of and outcomes for our young people. The expertise and skills we have developed in using data and benchmarking are sophisticated and the envy of many colleagues across the country. We have physical learning environments which are of high quality and continue to improve thanks to the financial support from the Council. Finally, and most importantly, relationships among our staff and

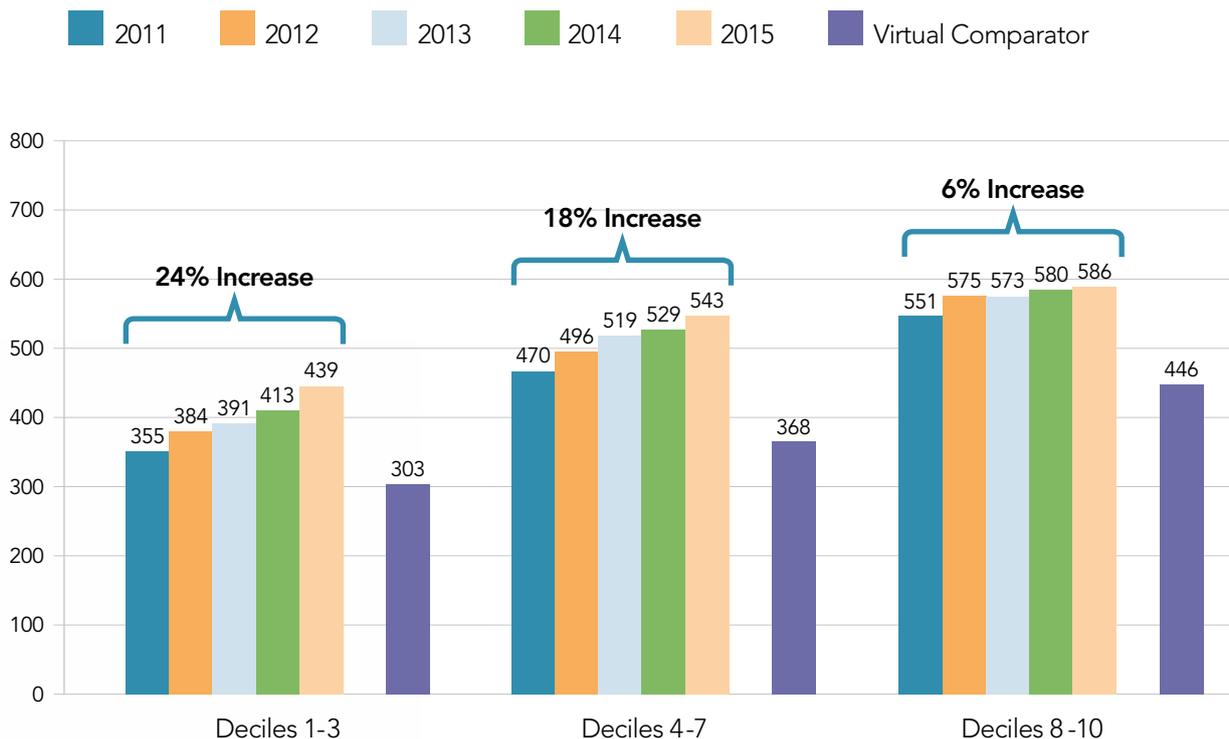
children and young people are excellent and are based on mutual respect.

Data from questionnaire responses indicate that the majority of our children and young people enjoy learning in schools where they have staff who care about them, their learning and their wellbeing. Most of them tell us that they take part in out-of-school activities, have regular opportunities to celebrate their personal achievements and participate in school committees or groups. Almost all of them tell us that they are supported and challenged in their learning. Fewer of our 13 and 15 year olds are smoking regularly, drinking alcohol or using drugs. In the latest Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) report, East Renfrewshire’s young people reported lower levels of emotional and behavioural problems than young people living in comparator local authorities.

We have strong evidence that we are raising the bar for all groups of learners while, at the same time, closing the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged and the most affluent young people.

Figure 1

S4 SQA 2011-2015: Average Total Cumulative Insight Points: By SIMD



Overall, this is a very positive picture but the ethos of East Renfrewshire Council has always been to improve continuously, to build on our past successes and ensure that we take the necessary steps to improve outcomes and experiences for those who need our services most.

Regrettably, some of our children and young people do not achieve their potential. The chart above (Figure 1) clearly shows a persistent and significant gap in the attainment in the senior phase between the most advantaged (deciles 8-10) and disadvantaged (deciles 1-3) young people. Similarly, we know that the attainment of boys throughout the broad general education and the senior phase lags stubbornly behind the attainment of girls. We also know that there is headroom for improvement with certain groups of learners, especially Asian Pakistani boys. And we accept that we have much more to do for children and young people who have additional support needs, including those with English as an additional language.

Equity is about taking the right steps to ensure all have an equal chance. It is the process rather than the outcome and can be about making difficult decisions to allocate resources to those who need and would benefit from our services most. We have data that shows that not all children and young people feel they are getting the same opportunities to celebrate achievements or to support them to grow in confidence. Questionnaire data from the most and least affluent areas of the Council indicate that more can be done in the west of the authority to balance the opportunity scales (Figures 2, 3 and 4).

From Figures 2 and 3 it is clear that pupils' perceptions about their opportunities to celebrate achievements and participate in extra-curricular activities vary greatly between the east (affluent) and west of the Council, yet 99% of teaching staff believe that pupils do have such opportunities. We know that celebrating achievement and offering opportunities for learners to experience a sense of achievement builds self-esteem and confidence and given that only 76% of learners in the west report that they know what activities and youth groups are available in their area, and 86% say they do in the east, this is perhaps something more than perception and should be an aspect to explore further in schools and with partners.

Figure 2

Pupil Questionnaires: % Strongly Agree/Agree
Q11: I have opportunities to celebrate my personal achievements

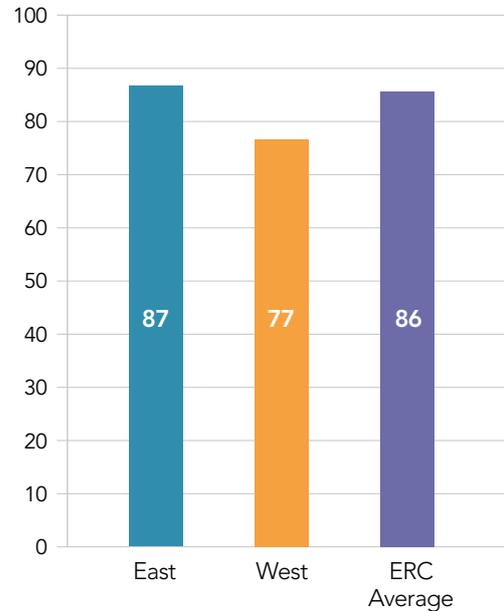
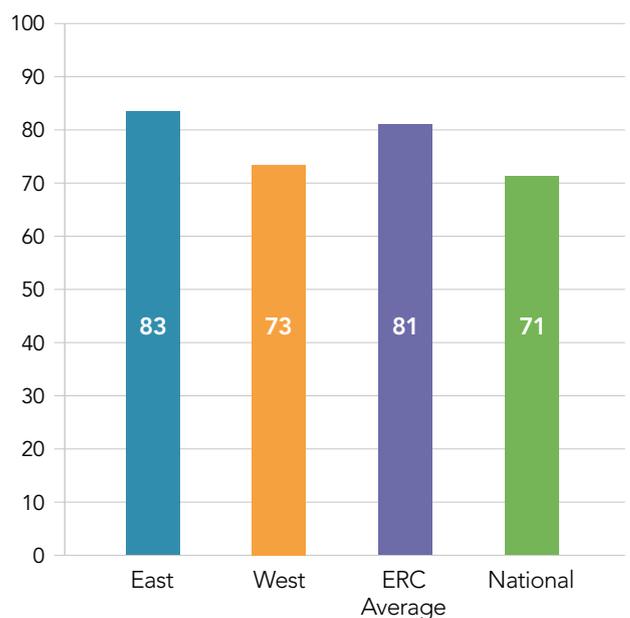


Figure 3

Pupil Questionnaires: % Strongly Agree/Agree
Q20: I take part in out-of-class activities and school clubs



“A giraffe and antelope are trying to eat from the same tree. The ground beneath them may be even but the odds of success for each are not.”

Figure 4

Question	Pupil Response (%)	Teaching Staff Response (%)
Staff talk to me regularly about how to improve my learning / Pupils are provided with regular feedback on what they need to do to improve their learning.	85	99
I have a say in making my learning experiences better / Staff regularly ask for pupils' views on how their learning experiences could be improved.	80	93
In my learning I have opportunities to make choices and follow my own ideas / Pupils experience personalisation and choice in their learning.	84	93
I have opportunities to plan my own learning / Pupils take an active part in planning their learning.	78	87

We also know that not all have excellent experiences in our schools and prefive centres. Figure 4 illustrates the differing perceptions of teaching staff and learners in terms of engagement in learning. We know that when learners are involved in determining what they will learn and their interests are catered for, their learning is deeper.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF)

In 2016 the Scottish Government published the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education. The framework was informed by two OECD reports; Synergies for Better Learning (2013) and, more recently, Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective (2015). The two OECD reports and the recommendations within each, alongside McKinsey and Company's How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better, underpin and inform this paper. Readers of the OECD reports will recognise that many features of the best education systems are already well-established strengths of education in East Renfrewshire. This paper seeks to build on those strengths to help us to raise the bar for all our learners.

The current priorities for the National Improvement Framework (NIF) are:

- improving attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people;
- improving children and young people's health and wellbeing; and
- improving employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

The six Key Drivers of Improvement which are set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) are:

- school leadership;
- teacher professionalism;
- parental engagement;
- assessment of children's progress;
- school improvement; and
- performance information.



In East Renfrewshire, we are pleased that the department's work already reflects many of the features of the National Improvement Framework (NIF). Consequently, we see no need to make a step change in the systems which have served our children and young people so well in the past. Rather, we need to build on our strengths, making changes only where and when it is right to do so, and achieve with greater consistency the highest possible educational standards in all our schools and services.

In order to achieve its vision for East Renfrewshire's residents, the Council has placed a strong focus on developing its work on prevention; community engagement; data, evidence and benchmarking; modernising how we work; and use of digital technology. Taken together these five key capabilities are fundamental to the Council's improvement agenda and are essential if it is to meet the aspirations of East Renfrewshire residents. This paper recognises that these capabilities are important drivers for education and complement the key drivers of improvement of the National Improvement Framework (NIF).



Outlining Our Refreshed Vision

Set out in the following pages are our renewed goals for securing ***Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences***:

- ***Everyone Attaining***: Children, young people and adult learners will attain at the highest level in:
 - developmental milestones and baseline assessments;
 - reading, writing and mathematics in the broad general education;
 - national examinations in the senior phase; and
 - vocational education and employability skills.
- ***Everyone Achieving***: We expect to see an ethos of achievement and high expectations within a culture of self-improvement in all schools and services. This ethos will be built on:
 - equity, where inputs are not always the same, but where schools and services are resourced to make a difference for those who need them most;
 - skilled and confident staff who deliver improved outcomes for learners through their commitment to professional enquiry, improved leadership of learning and change and who are focused on securing positive and sustained post-school destinations for learners; and
 - children and young people who are active, involved and motivated and who are supported in their learning by parents who work in partnership with us to help their children achieve.
- ***Excellent Experiences***: Our curricula will be designed to deliver experiences for learners that are based on:
 - teacher-led research and pedagogy, to ensure that we get it right for every child;
 - a focus on key points of transition, so that learners experience continuity in their learning and progression in attainment and achievement; and
 - a culture that is based on nurturing, inclusive approaches to protect and promote health and wellbeing.

All of the above are interconnected and depend on school staff, pupils, parents and partners working together to achieve the same goals.

Everyone Attaining

Research confirms that educational attainment is key to a successful future and so we must continue to raise the attainment bar for all learners in East Renfrewshire. In doing so, we must build on our current strengths and the achievements of our learners; anything we do must not jeopardise these. However, we need to have a renewed focus on improving the attainment of particular groups of learners, particularly for children and young people who, because they experience significant disadvantage in their lives, do not achieve their educational potential.

To achieve this we shall take the steps that are set out below.

- Continue to invest in School Improvement Partnerships (SIPs) and, supported by Education Psychological Services, use collaborative enquiry methods to test and share what works for underachieving groups of learners.
- Realign resources to ensure that SIPs are properly funded in order to take forward action research approaches and work with partners in universities to support schools to investigate and learn from local, national and international studies.



- Refresh the role of Quality Improvement Officers as critical friends of SIPs.
- Continue with our approaches in the assessment of children's progress. Build on the good start that has been made to moderation and quality assurance of teacher judgements, aligning these with standardised assessment information to ensure that there is a shared understanding of standards at all levels and in all sectors. Keep the use of ERC standardised assessments under review in light of the planned introduction in 2017 of national standardised assessments.
- Maintain and build upon our strengths in using data and benchmarking. Support our staff at all levels and in all posts to develop the capabilities associated with using information as an asset.
- Build systems to support benchmarking and use performance information to support identification of good practice.
- Direct resources and efforts to intervene at the earliest opportunity and where they are needed most.
- Continue to track and monitor the progress of children and young people from 3-18 years in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Focus on gathering attainment data, especially in the earliest years, and use this information to ensure smooth and effective transitions and continuous learning at key points of each learner's educational journey.
- Continue to build capacity of the department and schools to gather information on pupils' progress in all curricular areas and in developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens).



Everyone Achieving

A sense of achievement is an important motivator for success. It builds ambition, confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing and encourages positive relationships and inclusive, nurturing attitudes. If we are to be successful in raising achievement, our staff and parents must have high aspirations and expectations for all children, young people, and adult learners; we should place no ceiling on their potential. We must be equitable when allocating resources, recognising the needs of those who require additional support. The Recognising Achievement and Raising Attainment Strategy still has currency and we should build on this to make sure that we take the necessary steps in order to secure equity for all learners, especially those facing significant barriers to fulfilling their potential. To achieve this we shall take the steps that are set out below.

- Start as early as we can to intervene in a child's life. Ensure that all two-year olds who are entitled to free early learning and childcare take up the offer of a place and continue to work in partnership with other providers to offer places to those who need the support of a family centre.
- Devise and implement an Early Learning and Childcare Strategy to ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties. The strategy must be based on high quality early learning and childcare that improves outcomes, reduces or prevents the need for future interventions and is delivered by highly qualified and skilled staff.
- Continue to implement the Council's Early Years Strategy. Learn from what is working in Arthurlie Family Centre in Auchenback and roll out the introduction of Family First workers in areas of deprivation.
- Build upon the successes in early learning and childcare centres to support parents to develop the language and skills of learning so that they grow in confidence to devise activities, which will ensure that their children progress in line with expected developmental milestones.
- Refresh our approaches to parental engagement. In particular, revise our Parental Involvement Strategy to reflect family friendly and family learning approaches in schools and centres, ensuring that parents are supported to be fully involved in their child's learning.
- Ensure that Parent Councils are supported to represent the voice of all parents and in turn support all parents' voices to be heard.
- Broaden the achievement opportunities for all children and young people and especially for those living with deprivation.
- Continue to build a nurturing, inclusive ethos in schools and services which sees diversity as a contributor to success, rather than an obstacle, and maintain low levels of exclusion of children and young people from school.
- Renew our policies and practices in quality assurance and quality improvement. Refresh our approaches to self-evaluation and school improvement to focus on measures which support teachers to teach and learners to learn and achieve at the highest level.
- Allocate available management and support staff to schools, so that each school's staffing allocation corresponds closely to the level of identified needs and barriers to learning among children and young people.
- Invest in the collaborative leadership of change which raises attainment and achievement. Ensure that leadership of learning and teaching at all levels is ambitious and aspirational, understands what high quality learning and teaching looks like and knows how to make it better.
- Develop a Career Long Professional learning (CLPL) strategy which addresses the need to nurture and cultivate teacher professionalism from entry to the profession, through mid-career and into leadership positions. In doing so, consider the needs of all teachers at every stage of their career, from university students through to experienced head teachers, with the aim of building confident educators capable and empowered to deliver excellent experiences and outcomes for every learner.
- Build on the very good start we have made to masters level learning. Within the CLPL strategy support our staff to acquire the research skills that will lead to learning and teaching that meets the needs of all learners.
- In partnership with the LNCT, review our Professional Review and Development (PRD) procedures, ensuring that they fully support teacher professionalism and improved leadership of learning and leadership of change. Make sure that PRD processes are: based on self-evaluation; identify strengths and opportunities for CLPL; closely align with improving outcomes for learners; and secure school improvement.

Excellent Experiences

The experiences our learners have and their engagement in them are crucial to raising attainment and achievement. It is the quality of those experiences which make the difference. We need to ensure that the curriculum we deliver engages children and young people through an inspirational broad general education into a successful senior phase which secures positive and sustained post-school destinations. In launching the National Improvement Framework (NIF), the First Minister of Scotland warned against a “narrowing of the curriculum” and Professor Graham Donaldson recently cautioned against schools becoming “franchises of a model that works” and the need to move from “faithful implementation to exploration of what’s possible.”

To achieve this we shall take the steps that are set out below.

- Address the recommendations of the department’s recent report on the leadership and impact of Curriculum for Excellence in the broad general education, which reinforces the department’s vision for Curriculum for Excellence set out in 2020 Learning and Teaching in East Renfrewshire Schools.
- Renew our guidance to support each school to: build a curriculum that is unique to the community it serves; meet the needs of all of its learners; take account of and use performance data; and secure a learning pathway that leads to a positive and sustained destination for each young person.

- Work to deepen partners’ involvement in and delivery of the curriculum at all stages.
- Embrace opportunities to design a curriculum which addresses the need for prevention and early intervention; ensures that learning experiences are developing skills for learning, life and work; and ensures that learning is deep and continuously built upon to secure uninterrupted progress.
- Build upon the good work we have initiated to get it right for every child (GIRFEC), ensuring with our partners that we safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Refocus our attention on the responsibility of all to teach health and wellbeing, ensuring that we develop the whole child through learning experiences which offer opportunities to foster good mental and physical health.
- Ensure that learners’ voices are heard and inform improvements to learning and teaching.
- Lead the Quality Improvement Team to provide guidance and CLPL on the most up-to-date pedagogical research (0-18 years) that is appropriate to age and stage of development and curriculum content.
- Enhance and continually modernise the skills of our educators to support them to teach in stimulating digital learning environments which motivate our learners.
- Develop our partnerships and our approaches to community engagement, especially in areas of deprivation, to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people.



Planning for and Measuring Success

The actions we shall take collectively to reach our shared vision are set out above ; some are specific for the department and others are for schools and services. Each year the department will update the Local Improvement Plan (LIP) to reflect the aspirations identified in this paper. Thereafter, schools and services will use the LIP to devise their own improvement plans to reflect both national and local priorities. There are other action plans, such as the Curriculum for Excellence Action Plan, and policies which need to be revised and formulated and these will sit beneath this paper. The LIP will also make clear when these plans will be completed and implemented.

As indicated above, the department and schools are data rich and already have systems in place to gather and analyse information which will help to evaluate the impact of the work we shall undertake to secure our vision. Where systems are not yet in place, we shall take appropriate steps.

The metrics we use will include:

- attainment data to measure progress in the broad general education (BGE), including metrics for specific groups of learners;
- attainment data to measure performance in the senior phase, including metrics for specific groups of learners;
- school leaver destinations, including metrics for specific groups of learners;
- exclusion and attendance data, including metrics for specific groups of learners;
- benchmarking data on the effectiveness of moderation of teacher judgements of pupil progress within the broad general education and senior phase;
- percentage of staff undertaking professional enquiry, additional qualifications or masters level learning;
- percentage of teaching staff completing professional update and PRD;
- numbers of teachers undertaking further learning to ensure that they meet the (GTCS) Standard for Leadership and Management and aspiring head teachers who meet the (GTCS) Standard for Headship;
- percentage of ERC schools achieving 'good' or better in school inspections for:
 - learning, teaching and assessment
 - raising attainment and achievement
 - leadership of change
- responses from pupils, parents and staff to questionnaires which capture:
 - health and wellbeing indicators
 - pupil progress in developing the four capacities
 - learners reporting on their development of the four capacities
 - participation in activities which promote achievement
 - parental engagement in their children's learning
 - evidence of the impact of Parent Councils and of parents in supporting schools to improve;
- percentage of schools which work with partners to develop and offer family learning programmes; and
- self-evaluation reports from schools and the department on:
 - leadership of change
 - steps taken to raise attainment and achievement
 - progress with priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF).



Reporting on Progress

The department and schools undertake annual self-evaluation activities which are summarised in Standards and Quality Reports. These reports, as they do currently, will include data that will measure performance and provide information on the steps taken to secure the vision outlined above.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) sets out the evidence which will be gathered to measure progress with its four priorities. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016, supported by its accompanying statutory and non-statutory guidance, endeavours to streamline planning and sets out the reporting mechanisms that need to be put in place to account for progress with the NIF. This will have implications for the format of standards and quality reports produced by schools, services and the department, and we shall take this guidance into account when devising advice for schools and services.

As is current practice, we shall continue to report annually to East Renfrewshire Council Education Committee on the attainment and achievements of our pupils in the broad general education and

senior phase. We shall also report on the quality of education provided by our schools through (Education Scotland) school inspection reports and through the department's own evaluation activities. And we shall report annually on our progress in implementing and securing the vision set out in this paper.



Conclusion

We live and work in an ever-changing world and we need to respond to change to ensure that we serve our communities and learners to deal with the rigours which rapid change brings. It is also a time of reducing resources - we need to do more with less at a time when demand is increasing. Education, therefore, becomes even more important for securing outcomes for learners which will help them to deal with the challenges ahead and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and qualifications to succeed in such a world.

This is an exciting time for education in Scotland. The publication of key documents, such as the National Improvement Framework and the OECD report *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*, gives

clear direction on what needs to be done to achieve both equity and excellence. In East Renfrewshire we know that we have achieved very high levels in the overall quality of educational provision, but we also know there is headroom for improvement. Above all, we recognise and accept that we need to do more for those who do not enjoy the benefits of advantage and who face the most significant barriers to learning. This paper is written to help take education in East Renfrewshire to the next level. By doing so in all our schools and services, with an increased focus on equity and fairness, we shall achieve excellent outcomes for every one of our learners and become what Aristotle described as:

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."



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