**Parent Council Liaison Meeting via Skype**

**Thursday 10th December 2020 – 6.00pm – 7.00pm**

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| **1.** | **Welcome, Introduction and Apologies** | | | **Steven Quinn** | | |
| The meeting was chaired by Steven Quinn, Director of Children’s Services.  In attendance was Cllr Jim Paterson, Convener, Education and Children’s Services Policy Board; Julie Calder, Head of Service (Early Years & Broad General Education), Children’s Services; Gordon McKinlay, Head of Schools (Senior Phase and Inclusion), Children’s Services and Mhairi Thomas, Education Manager, Children’s Services.  The meeting was attended by 24 Parent Council Representatives via Skype, including David Macdonald, who represents Renfrewshire on National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS).  Minutes taken by Jamie Gardyne, Chief Executive’s Services | | | | | | |
| **2.** | **Previous minute and matters arising** | | | **Steven Quinn** | | |
| There were no matters arising from previous minutes.  Steven Quinn welcomed attendees. | | | | | | |
| **3.** | **Mental Health and Wellbeing Update** | | | **Mhairi Thomas** | | |
| Steven Quinn asked Mhairi Thomas to provide a mental health and wellbeing update.  Mhairi Thomas described how mental health can be a life-long issue. Renfrewshire has committed to focus on the mental and emotional health of children and young people, aligning with the national commitment to improve mental health as set out in Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy. The Covid pandemic has exacerbated the mental health challenges facing communities, compounded by other issues such as poverty. Early evidence suggests some young people and their families have experienced increased isolation and hardship.  Mhairi emphasised that almost all mental health issues are treatable and recoverable, and Renfrewshire is committed to supporting children, young people and families. The Council and its partners in other sectors deliver a range of early and timeous interventions, many through school curriculums. These are complemented by appropriate supports to ensure our children and young people have greater resilience, readiness to learn and the potential to achieve. Mhairi praised the efforts of school staff who have prioritised the mental health and wellbeing of pupils in our establishments.  Mhairi proceeded to outline a variety of programmes and projects that have been delivered or are underway in Renfrewshire. Key to these has been the drive to teach emotional literacy, and evidence-led initiatives have been successfully targeted across early years, primary and secondary sectors.  Complementary training opportunities have been made available to school staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to deliver a health and wellbeing curriculum and respond to children and young people. It is crucial that adults can respond appropriately to young people’s mental health needs. Renfrewshire’s Nurturing Relationship Approach is a notable example of training, with almost all establishments engaged and 20 achieving accreditation.  Mhairi stated that many children and young people require immediate support and therapeutic intervention. Counselling services are available, and resources can be accessed via Renfrewshire’s Educational Psychology Service. Parent Council representatives can access Renfrewshire’s Health and Wellbeing twitter blog for latest updates.  Steven Quinn emphasised the importance of Health and Wellbeing and thanked Mhairi for leading on this work in Renfrewshire and for her passion and enthusiasm. This was recognised in the recent inspection.  Action – Mhairi Thomas to email copy of presentation to Parent Council representatives. | | | | | | |
| **4.** | **National Qualifications** | | | **Steven Quinn** | | |
| Steven Quinn stated that on 7th October the Deputy First Minister (DFM) announced there will be no National 5 exams in the 2020/21 exam diet. These will be replaced with an alternative certification model. Further details were published on Tuesday 8th December, having been coproduced with relevant stakeholders. Renfrewshire Council is reviewing this model with Headteachers.  Steven Quinn assured attendees that a robust and consistent assessment model will be applied across Renfrewshire. Pupil provisional grades will be determined by class teachers but will moderated and quality assured across departments, schools and the wider local authority. Pupils will work towards a provisional grade but grades will not be determined until the end of May. Continuous assessment requires submission of work throughout year. Communication issued to pupils and parents today (10th December) and additional information will go out in January to provide further detail.  On the 8th December the DFM also stated that 2020/21 Higher and Advanced Higher examinations are cancelled. This means there are no exams in 2020/21 exam diet. An alternative certification model that will now be developed, similar to that of for National 5. It is important to be mindful that teacher capacity remains the same and the model’s development must take cognisance of this. More detail will be communicated when available. Julie Calder emphasised that the emerging assessment model will be robust.  Parent representatives posed the following questions:  **Q Will continuous assessment be similar or identical across schools?**  Steven Quinn stated schools will deliver their own assessment which supports the curriculum and the order in which they deliver it. However, there will be collaboration within subject networks to look at banks of assessment that can be used. Julie Calder added teachers have started work to review assessment to ensure it is robust and reliable and effectively maps pupil progress. Principal teacher networks will review and moderate the assessment that’s in place. There will be an added layer of moderation to ensure there is confidence in teacher judgement. SQA will undertake sampling to make sure assessment being delivered meets national expectations.  **Q Will grades be determined by individual assessments?**  Steven Quinn stated SQA are encouraging schools to look at 2-4 pieces of assessment evidence. Schools will also review the work the young person has delivered during the year. Grades will be determined by reviewing a suite of assessment pieces and by following the SQA guidance.. Julie Calder added that assessments will build a picture of what the pupils achieve.  **Q Will the Higher course remain reduced, i.e. still no assignments?**  Steven Quinn stated assessment will be based on the modified courses as previously issued. In Renfrewshire young people will be provided the opportunity to achieve the grades they would have otherwise achieved in a normal year. Teachers will be fully supported in this respect.  David Macdonald (NPF) provided related insight. NPF meeting held on 9th December with Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive at SQA where it was reiterated that schools, parents and pupils should be aware of the level pupils are working at. Maintaining open communication with schools on this and other matters is important. In lieu of January prelim exams, this dialogue will provide insight to parents and carers to facilitate improvement. Previously an algorithm was used in moderation processes to identify result spikes. The DFM and Fiona Roberson have stated this will not feature in forthcoming moderation. Relationships between pupils and teachers will not impact grades Steven Quinn reiterated this – pupil grade determined solely and wholly by pupil evidence. If there is a spike in a subject area in a school it will be subject to quality assurance checks. SQA may ask to see the pupil evidence, independent marking and moderation to determine the final grade. Grades will not be determined relative to the performance of others.  Q **Will pupils be aware which assessment will be used to determine grade?**  Yes, pupils will be made aware what assessments will be used. | | | | | | |
| **5.** | | | **Christmas Holidays** | | | **Steven Quinn** |
| Steven Quinn stated there is lot of media interest around when schools will finish for Christmas Holidays. In Renfrewshire schools returned two days earlier than originally planned after the summer break. A paper was approved by the children’s service spolicy board which granted an amendment to school holidays, providing children and staff two days back (Monday and Tuesday 21st December) meaning schools will finish on the 18th December. Test and protect will continue after the schools stop for Christmas, conducted centrally and in partnership with public health. The Council will have the access to pupil information, and the central team will be able to continue the test and protect procedures, making phone calls where necessary the week leading up to Christmas.  Pupils will return to school on Wednesday 6th January. It is important for many young people that they return to the school routine and benefit from the safe environment. Gordon McKinlay reiterated the school calendar will be implemented as is.  Steven invited parent comments. Parents who responded stated they were happy with Renfrewshire’s approach to school Christmas holidays. | | | | | | |
| **6.** | | **Closing Comments** | | | **Steven Quinn** | |
| Steven Quinn expressed thanks to David Macdonald for collating and sending questions in for the meeting.  **School meals choice and quality**  Steven Quinn stated the continued priority for school safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils. Schools have had to adapt ways of delivering lunch and this has been challenging. Priority is to prevent and limit spread of virus. There is no plan to go back to a regular meal service at the moment as associated processes can’t be put in place. Feedback from Headteachers shows support for current approach. It is recognised it is not the ideal meal solution but it has practical benefits and will only be employed for as long as necessary.  **When are we going to have comparative data across Renfrewshire?**  Steven Quinn stated that neither schools nor Education HQ has access to this, though it is being actively sought. Feedback suggests the Insight data tool will be published by government on 14th December but this has not been confirmed. If this is the case statistical analysis will begin, but no comparison can be made until this is available.  **What information does Renfrewshire have to carry out analysis?**  The team has conducted extensive analysis with existing data. Headteachers have this but they will not share other school’s data at PC meetings, only national Insight data (when available). This information is being used along with previous data to support what is being delivered this year and to support departments or schools. If Insight data is released on 14th December efforts will be made to report to Children’s Services Policy Board in January.  **AOB**  **Q Is there a bank of devices that school staff can request for pupils?**  Julie Calder stated schools received devices in October and since then each school as administered its own allocation policy. If young people are self-isolating, additional devices can be provided.  **Q Will self-isolating pupils be able to be accommodated in classes remotely?**  Julie Calder stated all classes can provide material to pupils provided they have internet access. Some schools beginning to pilot live lessons although this is a voluntary undertaking for schools and teachers. Initial feedback is positive and demand for this might grow. Alternative resources include the Council’s website for primary and secondary pupils. The site for secondary pupils has an ‘ask a teacher’ function with teachers online every school day to provide support.  **Q What online platforms do schools use?**  Julie Calder stated this varies although likely either Microsoft Teams or Google Classrooms.  **David Macdonald provided an NPF update:**  David highlighted that barriers to communication can impact how well Renfrewshire is represented on the NPF, however recent feedback in response to engagement regarding proposed changes to the exam diet yielded a good response, with Renfrewshire accounting for 5% of all responses submitted nationally.  The NPF is issuing parent and carer guidance in response to the revised certification model for National 5 courses. The same will follow for Higher and Advance Higher plans. The aim is to produce concise guidance that’s user friendly which will explain the impact.  Information will soon be published for parents and carers regarding LGBT education. The curriculum now has LGBT role models weaved through different subjects, in a similar way to what has been achieved previously in terms of disability and race. Revised guidance is also being given to teachers regarding sexual health and relationship education. Some parents have concerns about this subject. New resources have been written, agreed cross party and cross sector, and will be used to facilitate lessons.  David highlighted Gryffe High school’s Education Scotland inspection which rated the school as ‘excellent’ for raising attainment. The Sunday Times has named Gryffe High the Scottish State School of the Year. David expressed thanks to Colin Johnston and school staff for their hard work.  Steven Quinn expressed his thanks to David. Steven also highlighted the efforts of school staff throughout the term, and the complementary support of other teams and services. Teams have collaborated well to ensure schools remain open, maintained and benefit from specialist test and protect processes. Steven also extended thanks to parents for their support and patience, and Renfrewshire’s children and young people who have demonstrated exceptional resilience. | | | | | | |

**Date of next meeting: TBC**