

ITEM No ...5.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE –
21 JUNE 2021

REPORT ON: LAUNCH OF 'EVERY DUNDEE LEARNER MATTERS' STRATEGY

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 172-2021

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Children and Families Services Committee of the recent launch of the 'Every Dundee Learner Matters' Strategy (EDLM) and to share the attached strategy document.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Children and Families Services Committee is asked to:-

- i note the implementation of the 'Every Dundee Learner Matters' Strategy which is attached as Appendix 1; and
- ii instruct the Chief Education Officer to bring a progress report to the Children and Families Services Committee in one year's time and a full report in two years' time.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications as this work is part of our on-going partnership with the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow, which is funded through the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Background

4.1.2 As part of our Attainment Challenge work in Dundee, 13 targeted schools have been working with the research team from the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change on collaborative action research.

4.1.3 We are now ready to take this work to scale across all nursery, primary and secondary establishments as described in the Strategy paper (Appendix 1).

4.1.4 A Strategy Team was set up with membership from the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow - Mel Ainscow, Professor of Education; Professor Christopher Chapman, Founding Director; Stuart Hall, Research Officer; Kevin Lowden, Senior Researcher; and Dr Joanne Neary, Research Associate, School of Education, University of Glasgow and a group of Dundee Head Teachers from all sectors who took a lead role in developing the strategy (see list in Appendix 1).

4.1.5 Improving attainment for all is central to the Scottish Government's education policy and this vision is shared by Dundee City Council. Performance in SQA exams and against Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels are important in improving attainment.

- 4.1.6 We have seen improvement across many measures, however, there has been inconsistent improvement across a range of indicators in recent years, both across and within our schools. This strategy is designed to address this inconsistency by using the untapped potential that exists in all our establishments and move that knowledge around the system to drive improvement across all establishments.
- 4.1.7 This strategy sits centrally in our plans for raising attainment in all Dundee schools and nurseries and addressing areas of inequity. The strategy will incorporate two approaches to research, ie collaborative action research led by staff in schools and nurseries and in addition the researchers from the Robert Owen Centre will produce a report on the overall research findings for Dundee which will inform the national discussion for the Scottish Attainment Challenge going forward.

4.2 Implementation

- 4.2.1 'Every Dundee Learner Matters' was launched by the Strategy Group for all Head Teachers, Early Years Managers and the Education Management Team on 5 May 2021 and was very well received with very positive responses and feedback.
- 4.2.2 School Improvement Partnerships (SIPs) were established to support moving knowledge round the system and to support systemic wide change and improvement.
- 4.2.3 School Inquiry Groups (SIGs) are being established in every school to agree the areas for inquiry and research. All schools will focus on the 3 Ps:

Moving knowledge around

In order to provide a clearly defined improvement agenda, *Every Dundee Learner Matters* will focus on 'Three Ps':

- **Presence** – ensuring that all children and young people attend regularly and promptly;
- **Participation** – creating a climate within nurseries and schools where all children and young people feel welcome and valued; and
- **Progress** – developing policies and practices that maximise the achievement and ambitions of all children and young people.

In developing the strategy in relation to these outcomes, the group has made the following assumptions:

- **Dundee nurseries and schools already do well for many learners** - the aim now is to improve the learning of *all* children and young people; and
- **Within the nurseries and schools and their communities there is considerable expertise that can be mobilised to address this agenda** - the aim therefore is to move this knowledge around so that it is made available to *all* learners, in every nursery and school.

- 4.3 Further sessions with the Strategy Team will take place in May and June to support schools with their plans. The focus for all Head Teacher development days for session 2021/22 will be EDLM and there will be regular seminars throughout the session for SIG members to ensure on-going support and challenge.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness and poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Head Teachers across Early Years, Primary and Secondary sectors have led the development of this strategy. The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

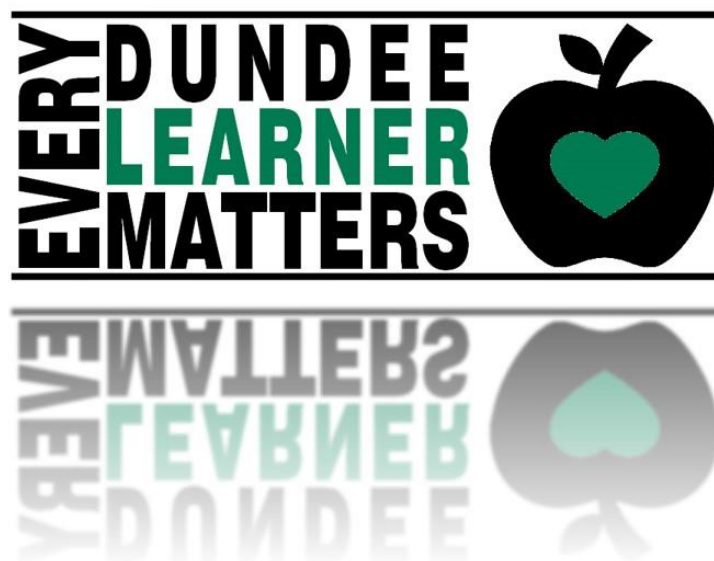
7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

Paul Clancy
Executive Director of Children and Families Services

Audrey May
Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)

June 2021



**A strategy for untapping the potential within
educational establishments and communities
2021-2023**

Dear Colleague

It is my pleasure to introduce you to “Every Dundee Learner Matters”, our strategy for untapping the amazing potential that exists within our nurseries and schools and across our communities in Dundee. We know from national and international research evidence that our education system can improve itself by accessing our untapped potential and sharing expertise and practice. It is through collaboration and networking and encouraging the leadership of strategy from within our nurseries and schools that we will truly deliver excellence and equity for all Dundee’s children and young people.

This is our vision, ambition and aspiration for Dundee, to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to receive a world class education and learning experiences that will help them maximise their potential and guarantee pathways to future successful lives.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation and gratitude for our partners on this journey – Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow, in particular Mel Ainscow, Professor of Education; Professor Christopher Chapman, Founding Director; Stuart Hall, Research Officer; Kevin Lowden, Senior Researcher; and Dr Joanne Neary, Research Associate, School of Education, University of Glasgow. They have brought a wealth of expertise and research knowledge to our discussions and have helped us develop and shape a strategy that is for Dundee by Dundee.

I would also like to acknowledge the support from the Head Teachers who were part of the Strategy Group - Barry Millar, David Bald, Hugh McAninch, Kim Flynn, Laura Fraser and Neil Lowden.

AUDREY MAY
Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)

The Dundee local authority has created a strategy group to lead a new phase of development aimed at improving the quality of education for all children and young people in the city. The group is made up of headteachers who are known to have the experience that will enable them to take on the role of system leaders.

The guiding vision is of a high performing system that is at the forefront of developments to find more effective ways of ensuring the progress of all learners, particularly those whose progress is a cause for concern. Central to this vision is a system that is driven collectively by leaders and involves educators at all levels of the education system, including early years and further education, in taking shared responsibility for improving the quality of education across the city. All of this is informed by priorities laid out in Dundee's existing strategic plan for education. This means that the strategy is seen as core business.

Innovation and creativity

The strategy builds on the established reputation of Dundee as a hub of innovation and creativity. This led it to be recognised as a UNESCO City of Design - the first in the UK to be awarded the honour - which puts it in the company of Berlin, Beijing, Buenos Aires and Montreal.

Drawing on evidence from successful developments in other parts of the world, the strategy will involve attempts to make better use of the existing expertise of educators and other stakeholders. This will require nurseries and schools to have greater flexibility to determine how resources are used to address local circumstances. It also builds on research which suggests that when educators are involved in decision-making this is likely to promote a stronger culture for learning within nurseries and schools.

The starting point for strengthening the capacity of nurseries and schools will be with the sharing of ideas, knowledge and practices through collaboration amongst staff. This can also encourage new thinking and experimentation with alternative ways of working. Research shows that this can be stimulated through an engagement with the views of different stakeholders, bringing together the expertise of educators, the insights of children and young people and families, and knowledge from academic research in ways that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, not least in respect to the progress of vulnerable groups of learners.

Moving knowledge around

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In developing the strategy in relation to these outcomes, the group has made the following assumptions:

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The *Every Dundee Learner Matters* strategy will emphasise:

Contextual analysis. This involves recognising that all learners are full of potential but that some determining barriers can prevent the progress of some learners. It involves identifying the resources that can be mobilised in order to overcome these barriers. It therefore requires an analysis of the best available evidence regarding the progress of children and young people through education and training across the city. This involves a particular emphasis on listening to all learners.

Collaborative action research. Emphasis will be placed on stimulating innovation and creativity. This will require a new emphasis on evidence-based professional development.

Shared leadership. The strategy will be led by nurseries and schools for nurseries and schools. This means that leadership will be required at all levels of the system, not least at the playroom/ classroom level.

Networking and collaboration. There are already many partnerships within Dundee that can be built upon. The strategy will be focused on making sure that these are used effectively and that all nurseries and schools are actively involved in ways that impact on playroom/ classroom practices.

The involvement of the wider community. Building on successful experiences in Dundee during the recent lockdown, this will involve an emphasis on fostering improvements in health and wellbeing.

A team of researchers from the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow will support these developments, whilst at the same time generating evidence to monitor their implementation and impact.

The strategy

Broadly stated, *Every Dundee Learner Matters* will involve the following interconnected elements:

1. An initial conference of headteachers and centre managers will be used to launch the strategy. During this event, members of the strategy group will explain the rationale and introduce the planned activities.
2. Each nursery and school will create a nursery/ school inquiry group (SIG). Led by a member of the senior management team, the SIGs will be given responsibility for coordinating a process of nursery/ school-based collaborative action research. Their work will be informed by a guide based on previous research.
3. The collaborative action research in each nursery and school will be supported by the team from the Robert Owen Centre, working in cooperation with local authority colleagues.
4. New nursery and school improvement partnerships will be formed. These will each include four/ six members, using a set of criteria to ensure that each

partnership will be made up of nurseries and schools that are at different stages of development. It is important to stress that these groups are set up to support the collaborative action research. They are, therefore, in addition to the other networks with which nurseries and schools are involved.

5. Twice termly meetings of the SIGs within each partnership will be held, during which they will share progress on their action research activities. There will also be termly meetings of the lead members from each SIG to draw lessons across Dundee.
6. The strategy will be a standing item at the regular meetings of headteachers and centre managers. In addition, the University of Glasgow will hold termly seminars for headteachers, centre managers and education officers. These events will analyse leadership roles in creating the organisational conditions necessary for the success of collaborative action research as a basis for nursery and school improvement. Peer review processes will be introduced to inform these discussions.
7. The team from the Robert Owen Centre will produce accounts of practice based on additional evidence gathered through occasional observations and interviews. The content of these accounts will be negotiated and agreed with individual nurseries and schools before they are shared across the local authority as a means of spreading important lessons that emerge.
8. An annual 'Dundee Learning Conference' will provide opportunities for nurseries and schools to report their progress.

In addition, a programme of activities will be developed that will provide professional learning opportunities for local authority colleagues as they consider the implications of *Every Dundee Learner Matters* for their roles. Emphasis will also be placed on ensuring the support of political leaders and community organisations.

An inclusive approach

In moving forward, the strategy group recognises that it will be important to adopt an inclusive approach that draws all stakeholders together to shape, implement and evaluate any changes that are introduced. In this context, differences – amongst learners, practitioners, nurseries, schools and communities - are seen as a source of stimulation that can encourage new thinking and practices.

The introduction of the strategy will have significant implications for the roles of local authority staff, including the team of educational psychologists. It will require them to adjust their ways of working in response to the development of improvement strategies that are led from within nurseries and schools. Specifically, the task of education officers will be to monitor and challenge nurseries and schools in relation to the agreed goals of collaborative activities, whilst senior staff within nurseries and schools share responsibility for the overall management of improvement efforts. In taking on such roles, local authority staff will position themselves as guardians of improved outcomes for all learners and their families - protectors of a more collegiate approach but not as custodians of day-to-day activities. Put simply: *the job of nurseries and schools is to improve themselves and the role of the local authority is to make sure that this happens.*

