

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 29 July 2019.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Councillors J Platt (Chair), C Dodds, L Garvey, T Higgins, M Nugent and P Storey and B A Hubbard (As Substitute)

**PRESENT AS OBSERVERS:** J Cain and J Robinson

**OFFICERS:** G Moore and A Williams

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillors A Hellaoui, D Smith and G Wilson.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members at this point in the meeting.

19/6 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 20 JUNE 2019**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, held on 20 June 2019, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

19/7 **PUPIL EXCLUSIONS IN MIDDLESBROUGH - AN UPDATE**

The Chair advised that, in respect of the scrutiny panel's 2017 review of Pupil Exclusions in Middlesbrough, the Director of Education was in attendance to provide Members with an update on the progress that had been made with the implementation of agreed actions/recommendations.

The Chair invited the Director of Education to present the submitted action plan update.

The Director explained that effective working relationships had been developed and established with all of Middlesbrough's primary and secondary schools. Arrangements were in place for the Director to meet with secondary heads on a monthly basis and primary heads on a half-termly basis. Regular meetings enabled schools and the Local Authority to work in partnership and facilitated collaborative working.

The scrutiny panel was advised that an Inclusion Strategy had been developed and was implemented in January 2019. The strategy was a multi-stranded plan with multi-agency involvement, which identified measures to minimise school exclusions in the town. The Inclusion Strategy provided details of the work undertaken by a variety of different agencies and schools to reduce the level of children who were permanently excluded. Inclusion work was overseen and monitored by the School Improvement Governance Board and the Children's Trust.

It was commented that, in 2015/16, Middlesbrough's permanent exclusions had increased significantly and were well above local and national averages. In 2015/16, 80 permanent exclusions were reported. Since December 2016, the Local Authority had been working with schools to implement models of intervention and establish alternative pathways for pupils at risk of exclusion. That work had achieved a positive decrease in the rate of permanent and fixed term exclusions. The Director commented, however, that there was a need for work to continue in order to reduce rates further.

In July 2019, the Government published statistics with regard to permanent and fixed period exclusions in England between 2017 and 2018. In England, the rate of permanent exclusions had remained stable, however, the rate of fixed period exclusions had increased. The North East had one of the highest overall rates of permanent exclusion across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. Furthermore, the region with the highest fixed period exclusion rate was the North East, which had seen a large increase. That had been the main

driver in the national increase. The Director advised that the increase in exclusion rates had been driven by neighbouring authorities, but not by Middlesbrough. It was therefore evident that the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and Middlesbrough's schools was having a positive impact.

The Director advised that the Local Authority was working with specialist alternative provision providers, particularly River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT). RTMAT provided placements for children and young people who were temporarily or permanently excluded or at risk of exclusion. RTMAT also provided outreach support to assist schools in developing effective behaviour management strategies.

In response to a Member's query regarding Middlesbrough's permanent exclusion rates, the Director advised that for 2018/19 over 45 pupils had been excluded. The scrutiny panel heard that the Local Authority's Alternative Provision Team continued to undertake a significant amount of work to reduce the number of exclusions. The team had an intervention centre, which was based at Acklam Grange School. The intervention centre provided extra support to identify and address the needs of pupils to reduce their risk of exclusion. The centre also provided academic support and tuition for those pupils who had been permanently excluded, who were awaiting a placement with an alternative provision provider.

The Director commented that the management protocol for managed moves had recently been reviewed, in consultation with schools. The protocol included additional guidance to ensure effective use of managed moves and an appropriate graduated approach to meet the individual needs of learners.

In response to a Member's query, the Director explained that, in the event that a child was deemed to be at risk of permanent exclusion, schools contacted the Local Authority to seek advice on accessing specialist support and/or alternative provision. It was also added that the Pupil Inclusion Panel had supported over 50 students at serious risk of permanent exclusion.

A Member queried whether school staff received adequate training to support pupils. The Director explained that a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) learning hub had been developed at Pennyman Primary School. The hub provided specialist training, which was commissioned by the Local Authority. Training packages were delivered to support teachers and school staff to develop improved high-quality practice, across all levels, in order to meet the needs of their learners with SEND.

It was also commented that the London Leadership Strategy (LLS) had developed a series of training opportunities, one that focused on peer reviews to identify best practice. It was advised that, in 2018/19, every school in Middlesbrough was reviewed to determine how each education setting provided support for pupils with SEND. The findings of those reviews were being analysed to determine training needs for 2019/20.

The Director explained that, in terms of the universal offer of support, the HeadStart Programme was a prevention and early intervention model, which was funded by Public Health. The HeadStart Programme aimed to improve the resilience of pupils to enable them to cope with the pressures of life and to prevent the onset of mental health conditions. All of Middlesbrough's mainstream primary and secondary schools were now engaging with the programme. The key features of the HeadStart Programme were workforce development, emotional well-being practitioners based in all schools, transition support and accredited training to create HeadStarter pupil mental health champions.

The Director advised that improved working relationships had been developed with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). CAMHS now attended the monthly meetings with secondary heads. Two secondary schools had been identified to trial the 'team around the school' approach. The approach planned to introduce a school-based CAMHS worker, who would be on regular duty within the school setting. The introduction of the school-based CAMHS worker had been planned to provide advice/guidance to school staff, parents and pupils; improve efficiency of referrals to external/specialist mental health support and equip schools to better support their pupils internally. An evaluation of the trial was planned to determine its impact and assess whether the approach should be rolled-out across other

schools.

A Member queried CAMHS involvement with primary schools. The Director advised a trailblazer bid had been submitted in an attempt to ensure Middlesbrough's schools received new mental health support and faster access to NHS care. However, unfortunately, Middlesbrough's bid had been unsuccessful. Upon learning that the bid had been unsuccessful, a meeting had been arranged to consider future options and the possibility of providing an intervening stage of support between the universal offer and the specialist support provided by CAMHS.

The Director advised that the Local Authority recognised that parenting and family circumstances impacted on a child and influenced their learning. Therefore, work had been undertaken to encourage schools to improve engagement with parents and families by appointing Parent Support Advisors. The Local Authority supported Parent Support Advisors by providing them with training and guidance. The role of Parent Support Advisors was to deliver positive outcomes for parents/carers and families to enable them to support their children's achievement and wellbeing.

To develop/improve engagement with parents, carers and families training had been commissioned in respect of restorative practice. The restorative approach enabled those who had been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible, and for those responsible to acknowledge the impact and take steps to put it right. Training had also been commissioned from Family Links. Family Links was a national charity that offered a range of social and emotional learning workshops and resources. Those workshops and resources provided school staff and families with tools and strategies to establish emotional health and resilience as the foundation for an inspiring learning environment.

#### **AGREED**

**That the progress made be noted and a further update be submitted when appropriate.**

19/8

#### **SETTING THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20**

The Democratic Services Officer presented a report that invited the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel to consider its work programme for 2019/20.

A list of potential topics, which were anticipated to be of particular interest to the scrutiny panel and the suggestions received in respect of the scrutiny panel's remit, were contained in the submitted report.

Members were advised that the topical issues and suggestions outlined in the report were merely proposals and the content of the work programme was entirely a decision for the panel to make.

The scrutiny panel was encouraged to select two topics where scrutiny could make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development.

A discussion ensued regarding the topics contained within the submitted report.

A Member expressed concern in respect of period poverty and whether schoolgirls were missing school because they were unable to afford menstrual products. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the issue could be examined as part of the proposed topic - Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning.

The Director of Education advised that the following areas were of particular interest to the directorate:

- Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning - to identify and remove barriers to learning, which existed because of the impacts of living in poverty.
- Corporate Parenting - to examine the collective responsibility of the Local Authority, elected members, employees, and partner agencies. A Member advised that the

Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel had agreed to examine corporate parent duties and responsibilities as part of its 2019/20 work programme.

- Parental Engagement - to identify the interventions, activities and practices that support and improve parental engagement.
- The Future of Education (in a world where work was going to be highly automated). The Director advised that the topic was particularly relevant given the recent publication of the revised Ofsted inspection framework.
- Early Years Education - to examine standards for learning and development from birth to 5 years old.

A Member raised concerns in respect of bullying. The Director explained that when parents or carers had concerns about the lack of action taken by particular schools, advice could be sought from the Local Authority. A Member raised concerns that schools required evidence to confirm that alleged incidents had occurred. However, on many occasions bullying incidents involved verbal abuse, rather than physical abuse, therefore evidence was sometimes unobtainable.

Members discussed concerns regarding the addiction of gaming and its impact on learning and school achievement.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that bullying issues and gaming addictions could be considered as part of the topic of Parental Engagement and the role of Parent Support Advisors. The Director advised that the Local Authority was able to influence positive change, in respect of the role of Parent Support Advisors, through the Parental Support Advisory Network and the regular meetings with primary and secondary heads.

A Member expressed an interest in investigating the education of immigrant children. The Director explained that when the Local Authority was notified of a family's arrival, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (based at Newport Hub), planned to arrange a home visit to welcome the family and support them to access school and educational opportunities. The team acted as an important link between school and home, attending admissions meetings and providing translation and interpreting services to help with communication. It was also explained, that if the team was unable to secure a school place for a particular child, the team would provide tuition. Once a school place had been secured, the team provided in-school support to pupils and family liaison to improve attendance and educational opportunities.

The scrutiny panel heard that schools and education providers had the opportunity to subscribe to an annual package to gain access to the services provided by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team.

A small group of schools had been identified as centres of excellence in respect of providing specialist support and tuition to international new arrivals. Those schools offered support to other schools in the area to enable them to develop their expertise.

Young interpreters within school settings were also encouraged and had demonstrated a positive impact in respect of the support provided to international new arrivals. The Local Authority also encouraged all schools to develop international new arrival policies and identify buddies and key workers.

In response to a Member's query regarding financial contributions to facilitate work with international new arrivals, the Director explained that the Local Authority had previously bid for Government migration funding. Current funding was available for another year, however, future funding was yet to be announced.

Following an in-depth discussion, the scrutiny panel agreed the topics for inclusion in its 2019/20 work programme.

#### **AGREED**

**That the topics listed below be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for**

**approval and inclusion in the work programme of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel for 2019/2020:****In-depth reviews**

- **Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning**
- **Parental Engagement**

**Short review**

- **Education of Immigrant Children**

19/9

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

The Chair advised the scrutiny panel that the Overview and Scrutiny Board, on 16 July 2019, considered the following items:

- Final Report - Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel - Mental Health in Schools
- Final Report - Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Early Help and Prevention Services
- Final Report - Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel - Working relationships with the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Final Report - Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel- Middlesbrough Community Learning: Employability.

Members were made aware that the final reports had been approved by the Board. It was explained that, following approval, the relevant department responded to the recommendations detailed in the final report and developed an action plan for implementation, known as a 'service response'. The final reports and the subsequent 'service responses' were planned for submission to the Executive on 3 September 2019.

**AGREED**

**That the update be noted.**

19/10

**PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2019/20**

A proposed meeting schedule, for the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, was submitted for the scrutiny panel's consideration.

**AGREED**

**That the proposed meeting schedule, for 2019/20, be approved.**