

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 20 June 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors C Dodds, T Higgins, D Jones, M Nugent, P Storey, G Wilson, S Dean (As Substitute) and B A Hubbard (As Substitute)

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: J Cain and J Robinson

OFFICERS: G Moore and A Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor J Platt and G Purvis

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR PRO TEM

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Hubbard was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that Councillor Hubbard be appointed as Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel until amended by the Committee.

2 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL FOR 2019/20

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Platt was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that Councillor Platt be appointed as Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

3 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL FOR 2019/20

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor P Storey was nominated, seconded, and appointed as Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that Councillor P Storey be appointed as Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

4 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 15 APRIL 2019

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, held on 15 April 2019, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

5 EDUCATION AND LEARNING - AN OVERVIEW

The Council's Director of Education was in attendance at the meeting to provide the scrutiny panel with:

- Information on the considerable changes in national education policy and school reorganisation over recent years.
- An overview of the main service areas within its remit and an outline of priorities, key issues and challenges for the year ahead.

The scrutiny panel was advised that when the academies programme was first launched, its aim was to improve educational attainment in deprived areas by replacing poorly performing schools or building new schools where more school places were required. The Department of Education's original objectives for academies were to:

- raise the educational achievement of their pupils;
- provide inclusive, mixed-ability schools; and
- contribute to raising aspirations and standards in the local community

It was commented that the majority of schools in Middlesbrough were academies. Members heard that all of Middlesbrough's secondary schools were academies, however, most special schools and a small number of primary schools remained as maintained schools.

In March 2016, the Department of Education published a document entitled 'Educational Excellence Everywhere'. The white paper set out the Government's vision to deliver educational excellence everywhere, so that parents and pupils across the country were able to benefit from the outstanding education that was already available in many schools.

The white paper set out a clearly defined role for local authorities, devolving power to individual schools. It was planned that local authorities would take on a more focused and clearly-defined remit so they could concentrate on delivering their core functions. It was planned that the Local Authority's education duties would focus on three areas: ensuring every child had a school place, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils were met and acting as champions for all parents and families.

The white paper conveyed that with the growth of multi academy trusts (MATs) the reach and influence of the most successful leaders could have been expanded so more children could benefit from their expertise, ensuring the best leaders could play new, more influential roles, as responsibility for school improvement was transferred from local authorities to schools.

In 2014, a new National Curriculum was published. The document set out a framework that contained contextual information about both the overall school curriculum and the statutory national curriculum. It was advised that the curriculum provided schools with the responsibility to develop a programme of learning to implement subject content identified for each key stage. Schools were also provided with the responsibility to assess their pupils and track their progress. Many Middlesbrough schools worked together to establish a curriculum for the area.

It was explained that in 2015 statutory guidance was published for organisations that worked with and supported children and young people who had special educational needs or disabilities. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice planned to play a vital role in underpinning the major reform programme. Local authorities and their local health partners jointly planned and commissioned services for children and young people who had special educational needs or were disabled.

The Director of Education advised that GCSE, AS and A level qualifications had been reformed. The new subjects were introduced gradually, with the first wave being taught from September 2015. Subjects that had not been reformed were no longer available for teaching as of September 2018.

Reformed GCSEs had been designed for a two-year period of study, would become linear (so

students took all of their exams at the end of the course) and had a new grading scale from 9 (top grade) to 1. Reformed AS and A levels were also planned to become linear, with AS assessments typically taking place after one year of study and A levels after two.

The Director of Education advised the scrutiny panel that Ofsted had published a new education inspection framework, which was planned to take effect from September 2019. The new arrangements planned to focus on curriculum, behaviour and development and on what children actually learnt, ahead of results. Inspections had also been designed to discourage the culture of 'teaching to the test' and a new 'behaviour' judgement was planned to provide parents with reassurance on bullying. In addition, the inspection framework proposed to evaluate learners' 'behaviour and attitudes' separately from their 'personal development'.

With regards to Middlesbrough's response to improving education, Members heard that several years ago there had been a selection of schools in challenging circumstances, that were not gaining sufficient support from other schools in the area (unlike those that were part of a multi-academy trusts). Therefore, it was agreed that the Local Authority would invest £1.8 million to enable schools to develop a self-improving system.

For those schools with low attainment and progress levels, extra funding was made available. The Local Authority and school leaders worked together to establish the most effective measures/strategies and an action plan was developed to address each school's particular needs. The process also enabled those schools to access the expertise from other schools in the area that were performing well.

It was conveyed that the Local Authority supported the five teaching schools in the area, Macmillan, Acklam Grange, Outwood Acklam, Pallister Park and the Catholic Partnership. The schools were supported with additional funding to help develop leadership and the curriculum offer. Those schools provided expertise in the school system to share skills and knowledge. To assist with that work, five Learning Hubs were also developed, to provide support on:

- data assessment
- leadership
- English
- Mathematics
- SEND

The Learning Hubs offered support to all schools in Middlesbrough through providing training for school staff and leaders, working with pupils and working to develop new initiatives in the town.

Members were advised that the work of the Learning Hubs was being fully evaluated by the University of York St John in order to determine evidence-based outcomes.

The funding was also utilised:

- To support parents by providing school-based Parenting Support Advisors;
- To deliver training strategies, such as Restorative Practice (restorative approaches 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);
- To improve the aspirations of young people through the implementation of Global Bridge (Global Bridge was a unique product which allowed young people to showcase their talents to educational institutions and industry); and
- To enable schools to undertake research projects on topics such as - reading, types of learning and the transition from primary to secondary school.

The Director of Education highlighted that, in terms of educational outcomes, one of the areas that required improvement was reading. As a result, the Middlesbrough Promise was developed. The Middlesbrough Promise was a partnership of education, health, literacy and community professionals. Building on the work of the National Literacy Trust, it aimed to improve the life chances of Middlesbrough's youth by encouraging children and young people

to reach their maximum potential through reading. The partnership undertook work to encourage reading at home, school and in the community and improve language skills and early years learning. In nursery settings, it was confirmed that the learning would be play-based and child-initiated.

In terms of ensuring every child had a school place, there was a demand for primary school places in central Middlesbrough due to an increase in migration over recent years. The majority of children had come from Romania and had not received any formal education. Additional places had been created at Breckon Hill Primary School and Abingdon Primary School. Migration funding had been provided to those schools to enable them to access training, expertise, translation services and employ additional staff.

With regards to secondary school places in Middlesbrough, for September 2019, places had not been found for 108 pupils due to unprecedented demand and as a result of the improvement in Middlesbrough secondary schools. In comparison with 2018, fewer pupils who lived in Middlesbrough were being offered places elsewhere, while the borough had seen a rise in the number of pupils from outside being offered places in its schools. The Director explained that due to a significant change in parental choice, Middlesbrough had unprecedented numbers of children requiring places in Middlesbrough schools. Members heard that the change could not have been foreseen, and was clearly a matter of considerable concern.

Previously 89-91% of parents had chosen Middlesbrough schools as their preferred choice, however, for the September 2019 intake that had increased to 95%. As a result, work was immediately undertaken to increase capacity in Middlesbrough. The Local Authority worked with school leaders to investigate how school sites could have been further developed to accommodate the additional children. The Director confirmed that places were secured for all of the 108 pupils at Trinity Catholic College, Outwood Ormesby and Kings Academy.

The scrutiny panel was advised that the application to open a new free secondary school in Middlesbrough had been approved. The application proposed an academy for students aged between 11 and 16, based in the Middlehaven area. Outwood Academy Riverside was due to open in September 2020.

The new special free school that was being built on the former Nature's World site, the Discovery Special Academy, planned to provide a specialist educational provision for children with complex and significant learning, communication, physical and medical needs. The school helped to meet an increasing demand for special needs facilities within the Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland authority areas.

Members heard that a free school application for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, submitted on behalf of the 5 Tees Valley local authorities, had been successful. Therefore, once the school had been established, 100 places would become available for vulnerable pupils. The vision for the new school was to provide specialist support for the identified group of pupils and to build capacity and skills in mainstream settings to meet need. Plans had been made to build the school in Redcar and Cleveland.

In respect of additional alternative KS1 provision, there were 10 rolling assessment places available at Holmwood School, which developed a targeted approach for younger children.

In terms of elective home education, the Local Authority and Middlesbrough's schools worked closely with parents to maintain children within school if at all possible. Approximately 0.3% of the pupil population was currently being educated at home, Middlesbrough's rates in respect of home schooling were low but were increasing, as were rates nationally. Local Authority officers visited homes to ensure that the learning was suitable and encourage parents to reconsider the move back to mainstream education.

A discussion ensued regarding the reasons parents chose to educate their children at home, particularly with regard to children being subjected to bullying. The Director explained that, in respect of the new Ofsted framework, a new 'behaviour' judgement was planned to provide parents with reassurance on bullying. A Member expressed concern with regard to how

incidences of bullying were recorded by schools and it was commented that the issue may warrant further investigation. The Director advised that, generally, schools were very proactive in responding, managing and recording incidences of bullying.

Members heard that with new housing developments, particularly in the south of the town, work was ongoing with school leaders and housing developers to ensure additional places were secured for children and young people moving into the area. Developing school provision on current school sites to accommodate additional pupils, and the possibility of developing school provision on other sites, was being considered/explored.

The Director explained that in March 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Middlesbrough to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms (as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014). As a result of the inspection, the local area was required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explained how the local area planned to tackle the following issues:

- A weakness in the strategic leadership, governance and implementation of the disability and special educational needs reforms in the local area.
- Children, young people and families had too little involvement in discussion and decision-making about the services and support they needed.
- Leaders had an inaccurate view of the local area's effectiveness. They did not gather, analyse and use information and data to drive improvement in provision and outcomes for children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities in the local area.
- Strategic planning was weak and there was no strategy for joint commissioning services across education, health and social care.

It was conveyed that good progress had been made since the last inspection. The Local Authority planned to provide Minister Zahawi with a written statement by the end of 2019, which would detail how the sustainability plan had been delivered in Middlesbrough.

Members heard that a mock inspection had recently been undertaken. Following the inspection, the consultant had produced a report. The report highlighted the demonstrable improvements that had been secured, however, those areas that required further development included:

- The range of equipment that was available for children and young people. A new Tees-wide equipment service was planned to open on 1 July 2019.
- Provision for those diagnosed with autism. A project had been undertaken to identify the support, advice and services available for children and young people with autism and their parents/carers. An information pack was being developed, in consultation with the health service and parents, to ensure families received access to support. It was envisaged that the information pack would be available from September 2019.
- Analysis of data. Work was ongoing to analyse different groups of data.

The Director confirmed re-inspection from Ofsted was likely to take place in the near future.

The Director explained that an Inclusion Strategy had been developed for Middlesbrough. The strategy demonstrated a commitment of all Middlesbrough schools to undertake work to ensure all pupils remained in mainstream education and provide the very best education for all children irrespective of differences.

Members heard that work was being undertaken to encourage schools to apply for the Inclusion Quality Mark. The Inclusion Quality Mark Award provided UK schools with a nationally recognised validation of their inclusive practice and ongoing commitment to developing educational inclusion.

It was highlighted that the Local Authority was assessing:

- The therapeutic support available to schools in order to establish whether sufficient

support was available.

- The training available to schools in order to determine whether teachers were equipped to provide specialist support to children with special needs.

In response to a Member's query regarding the waiting times for CAMHS, it was explained that the panel's previous final report 'Mental Health in Schools' had examined the waiting times and evidence had suggested that local CAMHS was performing well and appointments were scheduled within a maximum of 3-4 weeks. It was also advised that the Local Authority had submitted a Trailblazer bid. If successful, the scheme provided additional capacity and funding to enable the Local Authority to work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NHS England and local schools to transform children's mental health care.

It was also highlighted that CAMHS had been involved with inclusion work and had assigned designated CAMHS workers to particular schools, to establish a multi-agency approach to providing support to pupils.

In terms of alternative provision, work continued to ensure that sufficient places were available. The main provider of alternative provision was River Tees Multi Agency Trust (RTMAT). Schools were also being consulted with regard to the creation of school-based inclusion provision, three schools had expressed an interest.

The Director advised that as corporate parents, Members would be interested in the work of Middlesbrough's Virtual School. The role of the Virtual School was to raise attainment and accelerate progress for looked after children (LAC) and young people across all key stages.

Members advised that it would be beneficial to receive further information on the role of the Virtual School from the Virtual Head. The Director explained that the previous Virtual Head had been appointed to a new position - Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision, therefore, a new Virtual Head would be appointed in the near future.

A Member expressed concern regarding pupil exclusion, the Director explained that a review had been undertaken in 2017 by the scrutiny panel. The Democratic Services Officer advised that an update would be requested on the implementation of recommendations/actions in respect of that review.

A Member raised a concern with regard to internal isolation used in schools. The Director advised that the Local Authority continued to work with schools to encourage them to consider alternative measures to discipline pupils, such as Restorative Practice.

A Member queried whether period poverty had an impact on attendance at school. The Director explained that a scrutiny investigation into poverty proofing schools would be welcomed.

A discussion ensued regarding CAMHS and delays in receiving treatment. Members were in agreement that CAMHS provision may warrant further investigation.

A discussion ensued regarding autism. Members heard that a piece of research was being undertaken to examine autism spectrum disorder. A report containing the outcome of the investigation and the proposals to develop/improve current practices was expected. The Director explained that Middlesbrough had a specialist school for children and young people with autism. It was also explained that the Local Authority was undertaking work to establish whether the training offered to teaching staff, in respect of autism, was sufficient.

Finally, in terms of future recommendations proposed by the panel, the Director explained that although the Local Authority was able to encourage and potentially influence schools to consider different ways of working, it had no authority/power to make changes to academy policies, procedures and practices.

AGREED

- **That the information presented be noted and taken into consideration when**

- agreeing the scrutiny panel's work programme for 2019/20.
- That, in respect of the 2017 review of Pupil Exclusions in Middlesbrough, an update be requested on the implementation of recommendations/actions.