

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

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 14 September 2020.

**PRESENT:** Councillors S Hill (Chair), L Garvey, A Hellaoui, M Nugent, P Storey, G Wilson and B Cooper (As Substitute)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** L Chilton, C Nicholson, J Rodwell and J Smith

**OFFICERS:** C Breheny, R Brown, S Butcher, S Davidson, J Dixon, T Dunn and G Moore

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor T Higgins, Councillor D Jones, Councillor M Saunders.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

**1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION****2 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 27 JULY 2020**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, held on 27 July 2020, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**3 ADDRESSING POVERTY ISSUES AND THE IMPACT ON LEARNING - EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS**

The Chair explained that a selection of Heads were in attendance who had implemented measures that had successfully raised the educational attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Each Head was asked to present:

- details of the effective practices implemented to tackle poverty and improve educational achievement for children living in poverty;
- information on spending the Pupil Premium to maximise achievement; and
- case studies demonstrating the positive impact of their school's work.

The Head at Breckon Hill Primary School, the Head at North Ormesby Primary Academy, the Head at Park End Primary School and the Regional Head at River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT) were each asked to present their evidence.

**Breckon Hill Primary School**

The Head at Breckon Hill Primary School explained that, in the 2019/20 academic year, the school had 622 pupils. It was commented that the school had worked with the Local Authority to increase capacity within the school, meaning that the number of pupils had risen over the past few years. 84.7% of pupils were from ethnic minority groups and for 56.8% of pupils, English was an additional language. The Head commented on the importance of referring to stability instead of mobility and advised that school stability was 73.1% during the 2019/20 academic year.

The aims of Breckon Hill Primary School were for:

- everyone to have a positive attitude to school life and learning;
- everyone to celebrate their similarities and differences;
- everyone to feel safe and welcome;
- everyone to be proud of belonging to Breckon Hill school family, its community and

the town.

The Head explained that school continued to build on its strengths and commented on the importance of:

- Strong governance.
- A strong sense of belonging.
- Researching Pupil Premium best practice, both locally and nationally. Funding was utilised primarily to increase teaching capacity across the school.
- The School Therapist who provided emotional support. Pupils received effective support to promote emotional resilience and positive mental health and there was no stigma attached to visiting the therapist.
- Extended school activities, including breakfast clubs, after school clubs and work within the community. The school had a good working relationship with the Manager of Breckon Hill Community Centre, which enabled pupils and their families to access a whole range of activities, opportunities and support. It was commented that the Manager of Breckon Hill Community Centre provided vital support to pupils and their families.
- Paying for all visits and the Year 6 residential, thereby removing barriers and enabling all pupils to participate.
- Strong professional development.
- Excellent resources. A new Year 6 Hub had been developed and pupils had access to a large sports hall and an ISportsWall. The ISportsWall combined learning with keeping fit and active.
- Researching best practice, both locally and nationally, in respect of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- A curriculum that suits the school's pupils.
- Being appraisal-rigorous. Appraisals were conducted regularly, which facilitated development and progression of members of staff. It was also added that the school was a centre of excellence for the Inclusion Quality Mark and had received numerous awards for its work.

The Head also commented on the importance of:

- strong community links;
- strong business and finance;
- a strong leadership team;
- strong support for new children;
- strong communication;
- strong systems; and
- external validation.

In respect of data, the school kept track of progress and performance and monitored how it compared to similar schools. The Head explained that a 2 year old provision had been introduced to improve school readiness and the impact of the provision was continuously monitored. The school also carefully monitored pupil attendance and Children Missing in Education. Parents were encouraged to communicate with the school to ensure members of staff were well-informed of any absences that were predicted.

The Head explained that the school regularly reflected on its practices to ensure continuous improvement.

The scrutiny panel heard that the school had collaborated with the Local Authority to secure funding from the Controlling Migration Fund, which had facilitated the school in responding to the impact of recent migration. Work had been undertaken with other schools to discuss and identify effective ways of utilising that funding.

The school had been involved with research and development projects, specifically those focussing on the early years in respect of speaking and communication.

The Head also commented that the school constantly considered:

- Social and political climate of change - identifying the families that could be affected and ensuring those families receive advice and guidance on accessing support.
- Social cohesion - continuing to share and celebrate the rich and diverse community.
- Stability - acknowledging that each day the pupil attended the school helped in developing a strong sense of belonging.
- Admissions - a space was available for every child and all children were welcome.
- SEND - the school was proud to be inclusive and every child mattered.
- Resilience of staff - members of staff acknowledged that it was a privilege to serve the children and the community. School leaders ensured that the school remained a great place to work and learn and that members of staff felt appreciated and valued.
- Data - the school celebrated the progress that each child made and every small step counted.

The scrutiny panel was shown data pertaining to school performance. In the 2019/20 academic year, in terms of Key Stage 1 - Key Stage 2 progress, the school was well above the national average in reading, writing and maths for all pupils (including those eligible for pupil premium funding).

### **North Ormesby Primary Academy**

The Head of North Ormesby Primary Academy explained that there was currently 243 pupils who attended the school. Approximately 15% of pupils had SEND, 65% were eligible for Pupil Premium funding and 37% had English as an additional language (EAL), were new to English (N2E) or were an international new arrival (INA). It was commented that, some INA may not be eligible to claim benefits, therefore those pupils would not be included in Pupil Premium data. It was envisaged that, if INAs had been included, approximately 85-90% of pupils would have been eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

In terms of annual mobility, that was approximately 70%, taking into account the pupils that started or left the school. For example, during the first 10 days of term, the school had 20 new starters and 7 pupils had left the school. During the previous academic year, even in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, the school had 66 new starters and 32 had left.

The Head explained that around 22% of pupils were identified as Children in Need or were subject to social worker involvement.

The scrutiny panel was informed that the school had small classes as it was acknowledged that smaller groups contributed to more effective learning and teaching.

It was advised that teachers and teaching assistants all received access to effective continued professional development (CPD) opportunities. Members of staff were supported to react and effectively manage high levels of mobility.

The school operated a dual system of teaching whereby pupils learned in the classroom but were also provided with the resources, assistance and support to learn outside of the classroom.

The Head explained that Pupil Premium funding had been utilised to employ a Safeguarding, Attendance and Family Support (SAFS) Lead. The SAFS Lead provided vital pastoral and mental health support for pupils and staff. The SAFS Lead also had responsibility for managing the ECO shop, which provided groceries and school uniforms at a significantly reduced price.

Members were advised that the school invested greatly in the early years, specifically phonics and reading.

The school was a huge advocate of the use of technology and addressing the digital skills gap. The school invested in iPads, meaning that every child from Reception upwards to Year 6 had a 1:1 iPad. It was commented that iPads were used across the whole curriculum, including maths, English, science, art etc. It also provided pupils with the ability to be the

creators of their own content - developing presentations, animations and video content. Having 1:1 iPads for pupils had been critical during lockdown, as pupils took their iPads home and the school had been in a position to provide a strong digital offer of home learning from the outset.

Over the past few years, the school had liaised with the digital industry. The school's Year 5/6 digital ambassadors had been working with companies such as VisualSoft to enable them to become involved in digital projects. Those projects had helped raise awareness of the importance of technology in today's society.

The school used virtual reality to enhance the experiences of pupils and improve language, vocabulary and communication skills.

In light of the recent pandemic, the newest initiative adopted by the school was to allow those children in Reception to keep their iPads at home, which enabled them to regularly access activities on phonics, reading, language and communication.

It was commented that the use of technology had been particularly beneficial in meeting the needs of those pupils with SEND and INA.

In terms of enrichment, the school:

- Ran a breakfast club - breakfast club was a necessity as it provided a social element to the school and ensured that the pupils had eaten breakfast and were ready to learn.
- Ran an after school club - after school club enabled pupils to participate in activities such as circus skills, breakdancing etc.
- Subsidised the majority of school trips and visits, acknowledging the financial burden that requesting money could put on families.
- Had a school story garden and created displays with props to facilitate learning.

The school had created a 'Remarkable Minds' package, which included a selection of approaches, philosophies and training that members of staff could draw on to develop the mental health and well-being of all pupils. The package was work in progress as the school was continuously changing. Essentially 'Remarkable Minds' was a pathway that sat alongside the academic pathway. 'Remarkable Minds' highlighted the importance of:

- Academic Resilience - the school had worked closely with Young Minds and had access to high quality training from the charity to learn the best ways to build academic resilience for pupils.
- Metacognition - as the lead for the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) trial 'ReflectED', the school had become very strong in reflective learning and the importance of having a 'Growth Mindset'.
- Restorative Practice - following promotion of restorative practice by the Local Authority, the school had worked with Mark Finnis over the past three years to implement a culture of restoration, structured conversation and building of relationships. It was commented that over the past 10 years, no pupils had been permanently excluded from the school and there had only been one fixed-term exclusion.
- Thrive - three members of staff had been through intense training on the Thrive approach to help the school develop resilient and confident children. Thrive was a dynamic, developmental and trauma-sensitive approach to meeting the emotional and social needs of children. Pupils were assessed and then the assessment system would provide advice and guidance on strategies and approaches that would enable the pupil to achieve their full potential.
- ELSA - with four trained 'Emotional Literacy Support Assistants', the school offered regular provision and interventions to those pupils with emotional needs.

In terms of technology, the school had been an authorised training centre, for Apple, for five years. The school was also one of 35 schools that had been recognised by Apple as a distinguished school for leadership, innovation and educational excellence. It was also added that the school was a centre of excellence for the Inclusion Quality Mark and the school had

an Outstanding Ofsted grade.

In terms of school performance, for attainment the school was above the national average in many areas with the exception of KS1 Science and KS2 Reading. However, in terms of progress the school was well above average for writing.

The Head identified that, during lockdown, the school had managed to hold at least a 70% engagement of learning through every week of lockdown. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, Virtually Nopa had been developed whereby children could access online tools to learn exactly the same curriculum content at home as they would have learned at school.

In response to a Member's query regarding the trips that the school was be unable to subsidise, the Head advised that the cost of each trip would be considered in isolation, for example - the school might be in a position to pay £5 per pupil for a visit, however, if a trip was to cost £7 then parents/carers may be asked to contribute £2 towards the cost. In terms of the Year 6 residential, the total cost was £180 per pupil and the school provided £140 towards that cost. However, if parents/carers were not in a position to pay that money up front, the school would advise of possible re-payment options.

In response to a Member's query regarding the financial impact of purchasing iPads for every child, the Head explained that since 2013, iPads had been purchased gradually. In the first instance, the school had purchased seven, one for a teacher and six for pupils. When it had been successful in Year 6, iPads were then purchased for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). After two years, the school had seven iPads in each class. It was commented that the Academies Enterprise Trust had provided financial support to enable the school to purchase iPads for each pupil.

In response to a Member's query regarding esafety, the Head explained that the school had an exceptional programme in respect of esafety. It was added that afternoon sessions were held with parents, which enabled pupils to present guidance, information and scenarios. It was also planned that parents would be invited to a session to see the computer curriculum in action.

### **Park End Primary School**

The Head at Park End Primary School explained that the school had just under 600 pupils and just under 400 of those pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Over the past 18 months, the school had been involving its pupils in a project on understanding food poverty. The school had been working with FareShare to develop a school shop that was managed by pupils. Each week, a large amount of food was delivered to the shop, which enabled parents/carers to purchase food at a very low cost. Parents/carers were able to purchase 10 items for £2. The shop was really well attended and had grown in popularity over the past 18 months. During lockdown, the school had implemented a new model whereby parents/carers collected food when they visited school to collect the packed lunches for their children.

In response to a Member's query regarding understanding poverty, the Head explained that each year, pupils would be involved with charity work. Charity work had enabled pupils to understand global poverty and what it was like to live in a third world country.

The Head commented that education was a route out of poverty. The scrutiny panel heard that the Head had seen a cultural shift in families and parents were acknowledging the importance of education in improving life chances. It was added that the school had supported 11 teaching assistants to gain a degree-level qualification, paying them whilst they attended university. Those teaching assistants had then completed a graduate teaching programme.

The school intended to host a careers drop-in session for families. The session planned to involve local partners and businesses providing information and guidance to parents.

To remove barriers to learning, the school provided a free breakfast club for all pupils.

Approximately 150-200 pupils attended the breakfast club each day. Providing a free breakfast to pupils reduced the financial burden on parents. The school also provided a low cost after school club for pupils. The school currently charged £3 per evening and each pupil was provided with an evening meal. It was commented that the support provided by the school, to its pupils, had enabled parents to return to work.

In response to a Member's query regarding school holiday provision, the Head explained that during lockdown the school provided packed lunches for pupils. Around 300 packed lunches were provided each day. For those families who were unable to collect the lunches, a member of staff delivered them. That work highlighted how difficult it must be for families to provide food for their children over the summer holidays, for a six week period. It was commented that the voucher system had worked exceptionally well over the summer months, with parents/carers receiving £15 to spend at supermarkets while schools were closed due to Coronavirus.

The Head advised that the school was supported by Greggs which meant pupils could request toast throughout the school day.

In response to a Member's query regarding the type of food provided by the school's shop, the Head explained that during the Coronavirus pandemic the school pre-packed bags for families, meaning that each family received a more nutritious package of food. In general, a lot of the items received by the school were fresh products, for example - families had received butternut squash along with a recipe for soup. Although there were items that would be classed as treats, those items were divided equally between the bags. It was felt that by providing pre-packed bags, the school ensured that each family received a nutritious parcel of food. The school had been providing pre-packed bags of groceries free of charge to families during the Coronavirus pandemic and the Middlesbrough Rotary Club had donated funds to the school to enable that to continue until Christmas.

In respect of removing the barriers to learning, it was also added that the school supplied free PE kits to pupils.

### **River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT)**

The Head at River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT) explained that RTMAT provided alternative provision. The RTMAT had three academies that were located in Middlesbrough, which included primary, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Provision was provided for those pupils who had been permanently excluded or who were at risk of permanent exclusion. RTMAT also provided provision for those pupils who could not attend mainstream schools due to their health needs, including providing education at James Cook University Hospital.

Approximately 65% of pupils attending the school were eligible for Pupil Premium funding. It was added that the children and young people attending the school changed daily. Currently, there were 117 pupils attending RTMAT, however, the pupil population was likely to grow throughout the academic year. Last year RTMAT had up to, and including, 160 pupils.

RTMAT was predominately focused on learner outcomes. Research illustrated that 1% of children who had been permanently excluded achieved the benchmark of 5 GCSEs. For the 2019/20 academic year, 89% of RTMAT pupils achieved 5 GCSEs. Furthermore, in England, 4.9% alternative provision pupils achieved grades 9-4 (A\*-C) in English and Maths in comparison 10% of RTMAT pupils.

In terms of pastoral care, RTMAT had a large pastoral team, which included a full-time Attendance Officer, Admissions Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mental Health Lead and Personal Development Leads for each Key Stage who were responsible for each pupil's pastoral care.

RTMAT believed that behaviour was a form of communication and there was a requirement to listen to each young person to determine the support they needed to continue, successfully, on their educational journey.

It was explained that RTMAT utilised Pupil Premium funding to provide each pupil with their first uniform on entry to the school, including blazers, jumpers and ties. Also, as and when required, the academy would also provide shoes, shirts, trousers etc. It was commented that, by providing uniforms at that early stage, barriers to learning were removed from the start of each pupil's school journey.

Members heard that RTMAT had a very robust 5 day initial assessment period, where the school looked at the academic needs and the pastoral needs of each pupil. That work involved conversations with the pupil's family to identify issues that may have caused the pupil to become excluded. The school would then work with the family to try and resolve those issues.

RTMAT had 'Helping Hands', which was a large store room that had second-hand clothes, bedding, household items etc. Therefore, if a family was in need, the school could provide those necessities.

All learners were given breakfast on entry to the school.

In terms of case studies, in respect of one pupil, their attendance had been extremely low and when the academy had visited the pupil during that initial assessment period it had become apparent that a lot of their basic needs were not being met. The main reason the pupil had found it difficult to attend school, had been due to the fact that the family did not have a washing machine and the pupil did not want to attend school with an unclean uniform. The academy therefore arranged for the family to receive a washing machine, which resulted in a dramatic increase in the pupil's attendance and ultimately a positive impact on progress and attainment.

In respect of the Mental Health Lead, the lead had previously been employed as a nurse with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The lead provided mental health and behavioural support to pupils and offered 1:1 support and small group sessions. RTMAT also arranged training for members of staff in respect of interventions.

In order to increase experiences of those living in deprivation, the academy arranged for every pupil to visit a theatre and a restaurant. In addition, every pupil had the opportunity to walk up Roseberry Topping, which had assisted pupils with developing their resilience. Pupils also had the opportunity to attend a residential, which was paid for by utilising Pupil Premium funding, therefore, there were no cost implications for families.

In response to a Member's query, the Head explained that for pupils who began the school day hungry, food was always available. It was acknowledged that a lack of food had a detrimental impact on a pupil's progress and attainment.

The Head at Park End Primary School commented that, in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, the school had developed a new way of working whereby toast was available to every pupil on arrival at the school, not just those who attended the breakfast club.

In response to a Member's query regarding how schools manage cases of severe poverty discretely, it was commented that there was a key member of staff employed by each school to develop and maintain positive relationships with families. The Head at North Ormesby Primary Academy commented on the crucial work undertaken by the Safeguarding, Attendance and Family Support (SAFS) Lead in developing trusting relationships with families. It was added that text messaging families had enabled the SAFS to discretely contact families and arrange necessary support. However, the scrutiny panel heard that there were parents/carers who did not wish to acknowledge their financial difficulties and refused support from the school.

The Head explained that sharing best practice between schools was extremely important in identifying solutions and ensuring effective support was provided to pupils and their families.

The scrutiny panel commended the work of the Heads and their schools to address poverty issues, remove barriers to learning and raise the educational attainment of those from

disadvantaged backgrounds.

**AGREED**

**That the information presented at the meeting be considered in the context of the scrutiny panel's investigation.**

**4 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

The Chair explained that on 3 September 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Board considered the Executive Forward Work Programme, a COVID-19 Update from the Chief Executive, a COVID-19 Update on Education and Skills, the Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021 and updates from the Scrutiny Chairs.

**NOTED**

**5 ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

**Minutes - 27 July 2020**

A Member made reference to the minutes, which highlighted the importance of social workers developing meaningful and supportive relationships with schools and stated that from September, weekly meetings would be held between the Director or Children's Services and head teachers. The Director of Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that regular meetings were being scheduled and the frequency of those may increase given the current rise in cases of Coronavirus. The Member also commented on the importance of school governors receiving information and updates on the management of Coronavirus in schools.

**Next Meeting - 12 October 2020**

The Chair advised that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 12 October 2020 and at that meeting the scrutiny panel would consider its final report on Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning.

**NOTED**