



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH MARCH 2007

SUMMARY OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINAL REPORT: IMPROVING BEHAVIOUR AND SUPPORTING PUPILS AT RISK OF EXCLUSION

Aims of the Scrutiny Review:

The aims of the scrutiny review were to investigate the issues around behaviour improvement in schools and also in relation to the support which is made available to pupils who are at risk of exclusion. This included the examination of existing Council responsibilities and national policies and guidance. Information was also obtained directly from schools and teaching staff.

Terms of Reference:

The terms of reference of the scrutiny review were as follows:

- To examine the statutory requirements relating to the promotion of good behaviour by schools.
- To determine the role of the local authority in the process of promoting positive behaviour and preventing exclusions.
- To assess the impact of national guidance, strategies and support on local behaviour policies.
- To consider the roles and responsibilities of staff, pupils and governors in promoting positive behaviour.
- To examine, and assess the effectiveness of, local strategies that are aimed at behaviour improvement, including school behaviour policies and to consider examples of good practice in this area.

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- To examine support and training that are available to help staff manage challenging pupil behaviour.
- To assess the effectiveness of action taken prior to exclusions.
- To consider the views of representatives of teaching staff in relation to this topic.

Findings:

Evidence was gathered via discussions with officers from Children, Families and Learning, from schools and teaching staff and from examination of national policies and guidance.

A number of key issues were identified in relation to the terms of reference and these form the basis of the scrutiny panel's conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions:

Based on the evidence considered during the investigation, the Panel concluded that:

1. Behaviour in schools is a major issue that can impact significantly on pupils' learning.
2. There is a high level of commitment - both in the local authority and in schools - to supporting vulnerable and excluded pupils.
3. Early intervention is important - both in terms of supporting younger pupils and ensuring that pupils who are at risk or are vulnerable are identified as soon as possible. The use of the Council's behaviour support service by primary schools is an important element of such intervention.
4. Excluded pupils need to be returned to mainstream education as soon as possible.
5. There are a lot of examples of good practice in schools, such as the use of behaviour mentors and the development of mentoring schemes to address bullying. It is important that information on these is exchanged between/made available to all schools.
6. The transition between primary and secondary education is important - schools are not always aware of potential problems or pupil history. A consistent approach to information sharing would assist.
7. It is anticipated that the new admissions protocol for placing difficult pupils in schools will have a positive impact on their education and will assist in reducing exclusion numbers.
8. The direct role of the Council in managing behaviour in schools and developing behaviour policies has diminished. The authority is now involved in more of a "commissioning" role as schools develop their own policies and behaviour support provision.
9. The Council's behaviour support service (which is bought by individual schools) still plays an important role.
10. The position regarding the behaviour support service is volatile as the level of usage and service buy-back can vary. This may relate to difficulties faced by schools in longer term financial planning due to uncertain budget positions.
11. There have been problems in filling the post of Behaviour and Attendance Co-ordinator as the post is offered on a short-term fixed contract. This has affected service provision.

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12. The fact that none of the costs associated with excluded pupils can be recovered from academies - but can be recovered from other schools - is of great concern as this has an adverse impact on Council budgets.

Recommendations

Following the conclusions reached above, the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

1. That in order to assist secondary schools in providing support to new pupils, a standard document, which specifically identifies any potential behaviour issues or history of behaviour problems, is introduced for all pupils transferring between primary and secondary schools.
2. That all primary schools be informed of the work undertaken by the scrutiny panel and the panel's view that it is important that accurate and up to date pupil information is supplied on pupils who are transferring to secondary schools.
3. That all primary and secondary schools be informed of the work undertaken by the scrutiny panel and the panel's view that it is important that vulnerable/at risk pupils are identified at an early stage as possible so that appropriate behaviour support can be provided.
4. That a system be put in place to ensure that all examples of good practice in relation to behaviour support and management, including availability of external funding, are shared between schools.
5. That the effectiveness of the new admissions protocol for hard to place pupils, which is to be introduced early in 2007, is monitored and its effect on exclusion levels is reported to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel, together with a general update, after 12 months of operation.
6. That representations be made to appropriate bodies at a national level in respect of the fact that none of the costs associated with a pupil excluded from an academy can be recovered.
7. That every effort continue to be made to recruit to posts of educational psychologist and the effect of changes in qualification requirements on vacancy and retention levels be monitored.
8. That every effort be made to recruit to the post of behaviour and attendance consultant and officers be requested to examine whether - if the post cannot be made permanent - there is any way in which it can be made more attractive to applicants.
9. That the Council's Behaviour Support Service is actively promoted to those schools which do not currently use it.

**COUNCILLOR LINDA WILSON
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