
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 17 January 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors D McCabe (Chair), A Hellaoui, D Jones, T Mawston, M Nugent, M Saunders and G Wilson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: A Adamson

OFFICERS: R Brown, S Butcher, C Cannon, T Dunn, D Johnson, G Moore and K Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors P Storey

21/38 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

21/39 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 13 DECEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 13 December 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/40 **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) - FURTHER EVIDENCE**

The Vice Principal for Students and Communications, from Middlesbrough College, was in attendance to provide the scrutiny panel with:

Identifying SEN

- An overview of how the college identified where a student may be having difficulty, which may be because of SEN.

SEND Support

- An overview of the support that the college provided to those students who have, or may have, SEND.

Partnership Working

- Information on how the college worked with the Local Authority to:
 - meet the needs of students and ensure a successful transition into college life; and
 - ensure appropriate support was in place to enable students with SEND to achieve the best possible outcomes in adult life.
- Case studies demonstrating the impact of partnership working.

The Vice Principal advised that there were currently 60 high needs students, at the college, who were studying a range of programmes within the Progression Studies Department. The department delivered programmes that developed life skills and work skills. The department also offered programmes to prepare students for vocational study in areas such as construction, engineering, health and care and digital technologies. There was also 110 high needs students who were studying curriculum courses at the college. In total, 85 high needs students lived in Middlesbrough Local Authority area.

Through transition and multi-agency work, learners had excellent support to choose pathways and accreditations that met their needs. Through enhancing the skills and experience of high needs students, learners were able to progress to further learning, independent living and

employment.

In terms of the support process, the scrutiny panel was advised that there were many ways in which a student could inform the college that they had additional needs. The Additional Learning Support (ALS) Team provided opportunities for disclosure at the application stage, departmental interview, enrolment and throughout the course. If a student declared an additional need, they would be invited to a short interview to determine how the ALS Team could best meet their needs. Subsequently, information gathered at the interview would be shared on the college's system, Pro Solution. The strategies used and shared within the college were based on a short conversation, therefore, the members of staff who worked directly with students regularly updated the system in respect of the level of needs identified and the support required to meet those needs.

The scrutiny panel was shown an image indicating the timeline of the support process. It was commented that the process began with the application stage and ended with the sharing of strategies. The ALS Team shared strategies for individual learners with their curriculum teams.

At the application stage, information was gathered and students were given the opportunity to disclose a specific disability or learning difficulty. There was an option on the application form that read 'prefer not to say' and it was indicated that many students selected that option. As a result, the importance of the college identifying those additional support needs was conveyed.

The departmental interview stage provided staff with an excellent opportunity to encourage students to discuss any additional support needs. That subsequently enabled the ALS Team to develop a package of support.

It was commented that the college had a Transition Team who worked with each feeder school to identify those students who had additional needs, to ensure seamless support was provided.

In terms of the enrolment stage, if a student had disclosed a need, staff members would meet with the student to determine the steps that were required to ensure the delivery of effective support. All students who had identified a need would be signposted to the ALS Team.

In terms of the college's self-assessment that was undertaken during the 2020/21 academic year, in respect of high needs funded learners:

- 97.3% of learners were progressing to a positive destination;
- overall achievement was good at 90% (an improvement from 85% in 19/20);
- there had been high achievement in Catering and Hospitality, Hair and Beauty and Health and Care (100%);
- there had been high achievement in Life Skills (94.5%);
- funding was spent wisely and links with external agencies were used well;
- initial assessments were used well to plan, implement and target support for learners to ensure inclusivity and progression;
- procedures to recognise and record each learner's progress and achievement were rigorous and robust;
- teachers worked effectively with support staff to ensure high needs funded learners achieve as well as other students; and
- safeguarding was highly effective and students felt safe in college, enabling them to develop greater independence.

In terms of positive progressions in 2020/21:

- 4 students (2.3%) moved onto university/higher education;
- 101 students (59.4%) moved onto higher level programmes at college;
- 26 students (15.8%) moved onto employment (1 student secured an apprenticeship, 19 secured employment, 3 secured voluntary employment and 3 secured traineeships);
- 25 students (14.7%) moved onto external progression (with another provider, including supported internships); and
- 11 students (6.4%) moved into social care services with greater independence.

In terms of the student voice and experiences of the college, all students were encouraged to complete a survey to provide feedback. In 2020/21, it was reported that:

- 97% of students agreed that the teaching on their course was good (an increase of 6% compared to the National Rate);
- student satisfaction was good, 93% of students were overall happy with their course and the college (an increase of 2% compared to the National Rate) and 93% would recommend the college to others (an increase of 4% compared to the National Rate);
- 96% of students agreed that teachers constantly challenged them to do their best (an increase of 7% compared to the National Rate);
- 97% of students with high needs agreed that the teaching on their course was good (an increase of 6% compared to the National Rate);
- 98% of high needs students agreed that the college was a safe place to learn.

Members heard that the ALS Team was able to support a range of learners who had:

- Autism or Asperger's Syndrome;
- Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia;
- physical mobility difficulties;
- behavioural, emotional and social difficulties;
- ADD (attention deficit disorder) or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder);
- sensory impairments;
- personal care needs;
- difficulties with mathematics and/or English; and
- safeguarding and welfare issues.

Members heard that the college had a very successful supported internships programme. Reference was made to a case study, which demonstrated the positive impact of the programme in enabling students to build their skills and gain work experience.

In terms of the supported internships programme, 100% of students had completed an external work placement and had valued the work experience opportunities provided. Placements had been secured at the Shaw Trust, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and Autism Matters.

Of the 16 students who had completed work placements, one had secured an apprenticeship, one had been involved with the Kickstart programmes, six had secured traineeships and three had secured paid employment.

In terms of the support provided to those students who have, or may have, SEND, the college had in place:

- Dyslexia and Dyscalculia Support Tutors;
- additional English and maths support;
- Communication Support Workers for the deaf and notetakers;
- IT Trainers for the visually impaired;
- special exam arrangements;
- small group workshops with vocational coaches;
- dedicated study areas;
- specialist Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) providing support for students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, visual impairments, hearing impairments and autism spectrum disorders;
- LSAs providing classroom and/or personal care;
- mobility support;
- sighted guiding;
- a range of assistive technology software to enable access and inclusion;
- adapted/modified learning materials into accessible formats e.g. braille or large print;
- dedicated Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs);
- bus passes for all students; and
- travel training to encourage independence.

It was added that:

- The college was currently working to upskill members of staff in British Sign Language.
- Currently, there were 1384 (of 4500) full-time students who were accessing some type of exam arrangement e.g. allowance of extra time, a reader, a scribe, a word processor or modified papers.

In terms of assistive technologies, it was commented that 4000 laptops had been distributed. Members heard that students had access to a wide range of assistive technologies that provided valuable support to learners, those included:

- laptops and notebooks;
- dictaphones;
- intel readers;
- large print keyboards;
- braille;
- study skills software;
- speaking calculators;
- screen magnification and screen reading software;
- tactile mathematical instruments;
- coloured overlays;
- specialist software for the visually impaired e.g. Jaws and Dolphin; and
- specialist software for dyslexic learners.

In terms of partnership working with the Local Authority, the college had a web page included on the Local Offer, which outlined the courses, support and facilities available.

The college worked with the Local Authority in a range of ways. The college was involved with:

- the SENCO Network;
- the Vulnerable Adults Strategic Board;
- feeder schools;
- multi-agency reviews;
- the Children's Trust Board;
- the SEND Strategic Group;
- the Preparing for Adulthood Strategic Group;
- the Post-16 Moderation Panel;
- SEND Peer Reviews; and
- the School Management Forum.

Members were provided with case studies, which demonstrated the impact of partnership working between the college and the Local Authority.

Case Study 1 (student with a visual impairment)

- Transition work had been undertaken with E, prior to his move from King's Academy.
- A referral was made from King's Academy and a member of staff visited the school, during the transition period, to promote Middlesbrough College to a number of students.
- E visited the college, on a number of occasions, with his parents.
- Information was shared by King's Academy about E's progress.
- The college liaised with the Visual Impairment Team from the Sensory Teaching, Advisory and Resources Service (STARS), a service provided by the Local Authority, to share information in respect of E's assessments and his support needs.
- Discussions in respect of E's selected course took place with E and his parents to consider the adaptations required.
- E had a number of independent training sessions with the STARS Mobility Trainer.
- Prior to enrolment, E was guided by a member of staff and the Mobility Trainer around the college.
- Following the guided tour, it was determined that additional braille signs on doors

were required and railings were required underneath the stairs in the performing arts area, to avoid any injuries or accidents.

- Reasonable adjustments were made to ensure that E's transition to college was seamless.
- The Mobility Trainer continued to guide E around the college until he felt confident in navigating his way around the building.
- E was now independent with his guiding, with support from the college's Visual Impairment Specialist.
- E had received 1:1 support at all times in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtime. E had an electronic braille note and his resources had been adapted in college by the Visual Impairment Specialist.
- The STARS Visual Impairment Team had completed visual impairment assessments on site and provided a manual braille note.
- The Visual Impairment Specialist kept in regular contact with the Visual Impairment Team.
- E was on his way to achieve his Level 3 Music Practice qualification and planned to progress onto another course.

The partnership working established between the Sensory Teaching, Advisory and Resources Service (STARS), E's parents, the King's Academy, staff at Middlesbrough College and the Visual Impairment Specialist ensured that E had experienced a smooth transition from secondary education to further education. E was really enjoying his time at the college and his bespoke package of support ensured he was included in class, his resources and coursework were adapted and his learning environment was inclusive. It was also added that transport to and from college was provided by the Local Authority.

Case Study 2 (student with a hearing impairment)

- S's transition had been completed by the SEN Team Leader.
- It was ensured that all of the required support was put in place, as per her EHCP.
- S received regular Teacher of Deaf sessions to check her well-being and hearing aids and provide smile therapy and colour semantics (currently limited due to Covid-19).
- S had access to the speech and language therapy (currently limited due to Covid-19 and restricted visits).
- Transition work had been undertaken with S, prior to her move from secondary education.
- S was very happy at Middlesbrough College.
- An EHCP review meeting had been held recently and her parents had commented that S was happy, well and achieving and conveyed that she was receiving great support from her Deaf Role Model, Teacher of Deaf and the Speech and Language Therapy Team.

The valuable support provided had positively impacted on S and enabled her to progress towards achieving her targets. It was also added that transport to and from college was provided by the Local Authority and S was currently starting her travel training.

A Member raised a query in respect of inclusivity and awareness of non-SEND students. In response, the Vice-Principal advised that the college was an extremely inclusive environment and SEN students were very much integrated within mainstream education, studying alongside their peers. It was commented that of the 165 high needs learners, 110 of those students were studying mainstream areas. The college worked to ensure sufficient support and adaptations were provided to enable SEN students to achieve and progress in line with their peers. It was added that, at the college, the achievement rates for SEN students were the same as those of non-SEN students.

In response to a Member's query, the Vice-Principal, as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, confirmed that no incidences of SEN students being bullied had been reported. It was commented that the college had a very diverse community and the high number of students accessing exam arrangements confirmed a large proportion of learners required additional support.

A Member queried the reasons for student selecting 'prefer not to say' on their application form. The Vice-Principal advised that for many students it was due to the stigma associated

with learning difficulties or mental/physical health issues. It was highlighted that over a third of students who had requested exam concessions had not disclosed information about their needs or difficulties. When a student did not disclose their learning, mental or physical difficulties, the teaching staff worked swiftly and efficiently to identify those needs and make referrals for support.

Members commended the work of the college and the support that was provided to those with SEND.

A Member queried the support available for parents, specifically in respect of those with hearing impairments. The Vice-Principal advised that the college offered a course in British Sign Language and parents did have the opportunity to sign up to that. There was also a Parents Forum, which provided a facility for parents/carers, of children and young people with SEND, to communicate with one another, share information and offer support.

A Member queried the cost of the British Sign Language course, the Vice-Principal advised that the course was provided by utilising the adult education budget, therefore, as long as parents/carers had not achieved a Level 3 or above, the course could be accessed free of charge.

The Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services advised that the Local Authority's Sensory Support Team offered sign language support for families. The team worked closely with the National Deaf Society, there was a steering group in place and a range of support/training was offered to families. The importance of the deaf community notifying the Local Authority of any gaps in provision was highlighted, as identification of gaps enabled the Local Authority to implement solutions and ensure families were well supported in Middlesbrough.

Following a Member's request, the Vice-Principal advised that information on the British Sign Language course would be shared with panel members.

A Member raised a query regarding staff recruitment, retention and sufficiency. In response, the Vice-Principal advised that the college currently:

- employed 1037 members of staff;
- had low levels of sickness; and
- a good retention rate.

Members were advised that difficulties had been encountered with recruiting ALS staff. Those posts were one of the lowest paid in the college's workforce and staff members were paid just above the National Minimum Wage. Although the job was rewarding, it was also very challenging and staff members had a high level of responsibility when supporting those with SEN. To address recruitment issues, the college was working to introduce more training and progression opportunities for ALS staff and the posts were currently being regraded.

A Member raised a query in respect of assessing those who had not disclosed their needs/disabilities. The Vice-Principal advised that within the first 6 weeks (42 days) teaching staff undertook assessments and allocated tasks, for completion, to determine the skills and abilities of students.

In response to a Member's query regarding the college's relationships with schools, the Vice-Principal advised that investment had been secured to develop the Transitions Team, to undertake direct work with the feeder schools. Some issues had been encountered with schools being unable to share data/information about students due to restrictions associated with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Schools were unable to share information until an individual officially became a student of Middlesbrough College.

For those students who had an EHCP, the information contained in the plan was shared as part of the consultation process. For students without an EHCP, who had a range of needs, information could not be obtained by the college until the student had enrolled. If the college was able to obtain information on all students prior to enrolment, transition could be planned and managed more efficiently and enhanced support could be provided. It was commented that Durham County Council was piloting a 'passport', which was an online resource that allowed settings to share all relevant information at each transition point. It was also added

that the college was introducing CPOMS safeguarding software, which would transfer information on wellbeing, safeguarding, welfare and behaviour.

AGREED

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

21/41

EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised:

- Middlesbrough currently had the highest Covid-19 infection rate;
- Covid-19 rates had impacted on schools in terms of staff availability and pupils contracting the virus;
- there had been regular communication between the Local Authority and the Department for Education; and
- Public Health provided weekly data and statistical information on the schools affected by Covid-19.

The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that:

- in the previous week, there had been a significant decrease in rates, however, there had been a change to recording practices and the impact of that could not be determined;
- as the Executive Director for Children's Services had mentioned, Middlesbrough currently had the highest Covid-19 infection rate, however, rates had dropped from approximately 3,300 cases per 100,000 to 1,700;
- a discussion had been held with secondary head teachers and there was currently significant pressure on staff members to keep schools open;
- although there had been a number of partial closures (i.e. one or two year groups), there had been no full closures and all schools were currently open;
- in schools, there were mitigations in place, CO2 monitors had been delivered to schools to check air flow, there was advice on ventilation and broader business continuity plans were in place for all schools; and
- meetings with schools were being held on a weekly basis.

The scrutiny panel wished to convey its support to schools. The work that schools had undertaken to manage the impact of the pandemic, and the measures that had been put in place to ensure that children and young people continued their learning and education, were commended.

The Director of Education and Partnerships confirmed that the scrutiny panel's support and thanks would be conveyed to schools and the relevant Local Authority officers and partners, who had worked collectively to manage the impact of Covid-19 on schools.

NOTED

21/42

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

Vice-Chair Vacancy

The Chair commented that Councillor Mason had been appointed as an Executive Member and had subsequently been required to resign from the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel and his role of Vice-Chair. The Chair thanked Councillor Mason for his contribution to the work of the scrutiny panel and wished him well in his new role.

The appointment of Vice-Chair would be made at the next Council meeting, which was scheduled to be held on 26 January 2022.

NOTED

Future Meetings

It was advised that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 21 February 2022.

In respect of the terms of reference for the review of SEND, there was still a need to receive evidence from schools.

As the next meeting was scheduled to be held during half term, it was suggested that on 21 February, a brief update on Post-16 Education be received. At its meeting on 28 June 2021, when considering its work programme, the scrutiny panel had previously agreed to hold a one-off meeting on that topic.

It was agreed that schools would then be invited to attend the meeting scheduled for 21 March 2022, which planned to provide head teachers with advanced notice.

NOTED