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

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 20 March 2023.

**PRESENT:** Councillors D McCabe (Chair), A Hellaoui, C Hobson, D Jones and G Wilson

**OFFICERS:** J Dent, G Moore and K Smith

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors M Saunders, T Higgins and M Nugent

22/45 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Type of Interest</b>	<b>Item/Nature of Interest</b>
Councillor A Hellaoui	Non-Pecuniary	Item 4, member of three governing bodies

22/46 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 13 FEBRUARY 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, held on 13 February 2023, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

22/47 **LEARNING AND EDUCATION STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Head of Achievement and the Achievement Strategic Manager were in attendance to provide an update on the Learning and Education Strategy and the work of the Achievement Team. The scrutiny panel received information on:

- current priorities, key issues and challenges; and
- Middlesbrough's headline facts and figures.

The Head of Achievement explained that the Learning and Education Strategy 2021/24 had been developed and implemented following the Covid-19 pandemic. It was highlighted that work was underway to revisit and review the strategy, to ensure it continued to reflect Middlesbrough's priorities and challenges.

Members were advised that the Learning and Education Strategy had been developed to set out the current context for learning in Middlesbrough and outline how the Education Partnership planned to work together to improve outcomes for children and young people accessing education in Middlesbrough. The strategy planned to:

- review and evaluate performance (including school performance data at Key Stages 1 through to 4 in primary and secondary education);
- celebrate successes;
- identify challenges; and
- set priorities.

Members heard that the Learning and Education Strategy aimed to increase attainment and achievement across all schools and settings in Middlesbrough, and for all learners from early years (EYFS) to key stage 4 (KS4). It was highlighted that children deserved the best education experience, including high-quality learning and teaching.

The Department for Education (DfE) had commented that the Local Authority's Learning and Education Strategy was an excellent document.

The scrutiny panel was advised that the Learning and Education Strategy set out five thematic areas to support schools and target improvements:

- School Improvement
  - To develop a strengthened school-led system, ensuring a positive impact on the quality of provision in all schools and outcomes for all pupils.
  - To work with leaders at local, Trust and individual school levels in order to improve the effectiveness of school leadership and drive improvement.
- Early Years and Childcare
  - To provide support for all early years settings, building strong relationships with early years leads across the town.
- International New Arrival /English as an Additional Language (EAL)
  - To meet the needs of EAL children in the right place, at the right time and with the right support - through supporting greater inclusion across all schools and settings.
- Transitions
  - To work with stakeholders across primary and secondary settings to develop an agreed, consistent and widely understood policy.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
  - To monitor and identify the gap between all pupils and disadvantaged pupils in key stages Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM).

It was explained that in terms of Achieving 2 Year Olds (A2YO), 90% of 2 year olds in Middlesbrough were entitled to access a free early education place for up to 15 hours a week. Members heard that take-up was currently recorded at 95% to 97%. It was reported that, in respect of the percentage of children who were eligible, Middlesbrough was ranked top regionally and third nationally.

A Member raised a query regarding sufficiency, given the Government's plans to extend free childcare to all children from 9 months up in September 2024. The Head of Achievement advised that, currently, 1500 places were available. It was confirmed that Middlesbrough had sufficient capacity to provide a free early education place for those additional children.

It was commented that the Local Authority had received £3 million of Government funding to establish family hubs, which planned to provide families with integrated support to care for their children from conception, throughout the early years, and into the start of adulthood (up to 25 for those with SEND). It was highlighted that local services would work in integrated ways to provide families with universal and targeted support. Members heard that the family hubs would involve the co-location of services and professionals, such as health visitors, midwives, early years practitioners etc.

A Member raised a query in respect of overcrowded households and the potential impact on a child's education. In response, the Head of Achievement advised that there had been an influx of overseas students with families. It was commented that the Ethnic Minority Team Leader had been working with Teesside University to understand the needs of those families and ensure children were able to access high-quality education.

Members heard that Local Authority funding had been utilised to establish an English/Literacy Hub. It was explained that the hub offered high-quality support, which was delivered by professionals who specialised in teaching literacy.

In respect of Ofsted outcomes, it was advised that there had been 10 school inspections in 2021/22. Of those 10 inspections, 7 schools had retained judgements of Good, 2 schools had improved judgements from Requires Improvement and 1 had been downgraded. It was highlighted that, currently, 90% of Middlesbrough's schools (primary, secondary and special) were rated as Good or better.

Through collaboration with schools, the Local Authority's Achievement Team worked to ensure that every child and young person in Middlesbrough had equal access to high-quality education. The work of the team aimed to increase and improve the life chances of every child and enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes - at every stage of their learning journey and beyond.

In terms of the work of the Achievement Team, during the academic year 2021/2022:

- 87 advisor visits had been made to primary schools;

- 29 advisor visits had been made to secondary schools;
- 185 school staff members had attended training and development (CPD) in 63 primary school sessions;
- 16 school staff members had attended 3 secondary schools sessions;
- 13 English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) audits had been conducted;
- 28 strategic level conversations had taken place; and
- 1 Monitoring and Support Group had been established.

It was highlighted that the work of the Achievement Team was highly regarded and there had been 100% engagement from all Middlesbrough's schools.

It was explained that during the academic year 2021/2022, the Achievement Team had:

- established a Designated Safeguarding Lead network (134 attendees)
- developed an Early Years Foundation Stage network (39 attendees) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) network (21 attendees); and
- delivered professional development sessions for school staff, on topics such as Launchpad for Literacy, Sounds Write, moderation, agreement trialling, communication counts, strategic conversations with school leaders, monitoring support groups, membership of the School Improvement Board, early years support and monitoring and development of Support to Talk resource.

The scrutiny panel was advised that a white paper, published by the Department for Education (DfE), set out an ambition that by 2030 - 90% of primary school children would achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (RWM). It was highlighted that in Middlesbrough, recent data reported that 56.5% of pupils achieved the expected standard in RWM.

A Member raised a query in respect of the support provided for EAL children. In response, the Head of Achievement advised that, since September 2022, 493 EAL children had arrived in Middlesbrough and had been allocated a school place. It was explained that, to manage the increased demand, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) was currently recruiting two bilingual support workers.

In terms of the transition, Members heard that work was currently being undertaken to ensure that the correct information was shared between settings, to effectively plan and manage the transition process.

In respect of Middlesbrough, key information was conveyed to the scrutiny panel:

- the borough was ranked 5th most deprived area nationally;
- children entering education in the early years had low starting points in terms of speech, communication and language skills;
- children had lower than national average phonics outcomes;
- there was disparity between the highest and lowest performing schools delivering primary education;
- there were high levels of disadvantage and social care involvement;
- children receiving SEND support had lower outcomes;
- there had been a 60% increase in referrals for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs);
- gaps were widening for all, but particularly vulnerable children between KS2 and KS4;
- there were high mobility rates; and
- there was low parental engagement and aspiration.

Members heard that Middlesbrough's children often made great progress, however, Ofsted did not consider such data.

Members expressed concern in respect of Middlesbrough's high levels of deprivation and its impact on educational outcomes. Members commented that parental engagement was key in improving outcomes. In response, the Head of Achievement advised that the family hubs would involve Middlesbrough Community Learning, to improve parental engagement and increase aspirations by facilitating access to high-quality learning opportunities for parents of

all ages and abilities.

The scrutiny panel was advised that a 4 week programme had recently been accessed by Year 10 pupils, which was specifically aimed at raising aspirations. The programme facilitated discussions between pupils and individuals from different professional backgrounds and occupations. It was explained that each pupil was able to choose a mentor, working in an occupation that they considered interesting, to gain knowledge and insight into the world of work. It was explained that the impact of the programme would be determined by assessing school outcomes and attendance of attendees, when they moved up to Year 11.

It was highlighted that, in Middlesbrough, there were 48 registered child minders, 29 were rated as Good by Ofsted, 9 as Outstanding, 1 as Requires Improvement. Members heard there was currently 39 Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings and 100% of those had Good or better Ofsted ratings. Furthermore, in terms of primary, secondary and special education, 90% of schools had Good or better Ofsted ratings.

In terms of Middlesbrough's pupils, it was highlighted that:

- there was a 5<sup>th</sup> of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- 38.2% of pupils were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) (nationally, 22.5% of pupils were eligible); and
- between September 2021 and September 2022, 567 International New Arrivals had secured a place in Middlesbrough's secondary schools and 1442 had secured a place in Middlesbrough's primary schools.

To conclude, Members heard that schools had engaged positively with the Local Authority by attending CPD and facilitating advisor visits. It was commented that all the support accessed by schools was underpinned by the Ofsted Inspection Framework.

It was highlighted that the goals for academic year 22/23 were:

- To encourage schools that were Good or Outstanding to support other schools and develop capacity to implement system-wide and sustainable improvement across Middlesbrough.
- To facilitate school to school support, placing it at the heart of system-wide arrangements to help ensure a good school for every child.
- To identify and create diverse curriculum opportunities to support schools to help pupils to remain engaged in school and in their education.
- To establish learning hubs for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), English as an Additional Language (EAL) and to build on the work of the English/Literacy Hub that was already in place.
- To target funding and resources to facilitate rapid improvement.
- To support and challenge schools to remain Good or Outstanding, and improve from Requires Improvement and Inadequate judgments in the shortest possible time.
- To support schools in responding to national policy changes and government initiatives.

A Member raised a query regarding the school that had been downgraded. In response, the Head of Achievement advised that Outwood Academy Ormesby had been judged Inadequate by Ofsted. It was explained that the Local Authority was working closely with Outwood Academy Ormesby to secure significant improvements in respect of the academy's standards and performance.

**That the information and data presented to the scrutiny panel be noted.**

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

The Chair advised that on 22 February 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- the Corporate Performance Update for Quarter Three 2022-2023;
- the Revenue and Capital Budget Projected Outturn Position for Quarter Three

- 2022/23;
- the Children's Finance Improvement Plan;
  - the Statutory Finance Report;
  - the Mayoral Budget Proposals 2023/24, Medium Term Financial Plan and Investment Strategy, including the outcome of the consultation;
  - the Final Report of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel on Youth Offending and Partnership Working with Schools;
  - the Final Report of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel on Off Road Bikes; and
  - updates from the Scrutiny Chairs.

**NOTED**