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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 22 March 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors S Hill (Chair), P Storey (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, D Jones, T Mawston, M Nugent, G Wilson and B Cooper (Reserve)  
(Substitute for M Saunders)

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

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors M Saunders

### 20/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### 20/3 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 18 JANUARY 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 18 January 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### 20/4 **BEHAVIOUR, DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS - WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS (PART 1)**

The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to enable the scrutiny panel to receive further evidence in respect of its topic of Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools.

The scrutiny panel was asked to consider written evidence from schools that had encountered higher rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Written submissions had been received from Outwood Academy Acklam and The Kings Academy. The evidence received highlighted:

- the challenges faced by schools in dealing with poor behaviour;
- the causes of pupil behaviour problems e.g. unmet educational or other needs; and
- the strategies adopted to promote positive behaviour, manage poor behaviour and prevent and tackle bullying.

Written evidence had also been received from schools that demonstrated best practice. Written submissions had been received from Acklam Grange School, Park End Primary School and Unity City Academy. The evidence received highlighted:

- the types of sanctions used by schools that could impact on a pupil's educational outcomes and life chances; and
- the successful and proactive strategies and solutions used to promote positive behaviour, manage poor behaviour and prevent and tackle bullying.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision and the Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships were in attendance to provide an overview of the evidence submitted for consideration.

Following a proposal from the Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision, it was agreed that a summary of the key points raised would be provided, cutting

across evidence received for both agenda items (Part 1 and Part 2).

In terms of secondary schools, the common themes identified when considering the challenges faced in dealing with poor behaviour and bullying included:

- deprivation;
- diverse communities (religion, race, culture);
- SEND;
- looked after children; and
- 'hard to reach' parents.

It was advised that the challenges identified did not provide justification for poor behaviour, however, they could be perceived to be contributory factors. It was explained that the more variable factors that a school had in its community and cohorts, the greater the need for the school to focus on strong management and delivery of engaging and effective teaching and learning.

With regard to managing variables, the Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that with Ofsted's new inspection framework, there was more leniency around the types of learning styles and activities that schools could adopt to meet the needs of their cohorts.

For Park End Primary School, whilst levels of deprivation were high, the school positively engaged with parents. The school's engagement with parents had been referenced in its most recent Ofsted inspection report, which stated that an overwhelming majority of parents had commented positively about the care that the school gave to their children. Parents were positive about the information they received about their child's learning and appreciated how welcome they felt when visiting the school and talking about any concerns they may have had. Parents also commented that the school's emphasis on good behaviour was having a positive effect on their child outside school. It was commented that Park End Primary School was doing an excellent job in managing behaviour.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that, in terms of successful and proactive strategies and solutions used to promote positive behaviour, manage poor behaviour and prevent and tackle bullying, the secondary schools made reference to:

- building effective relationships with parents from as early as year 6;
- making good behaviour part of the school's ethos, e.g. Respect agenda;
- teaching and modelling good behaviour;
- involving external agencies to access support, e.g. CAMHS / SEND Team / Virtual School;
- investing in a high-quality pastoral team;
- providing extensive mental health and therapeutic support;
- using rewards systems;
- using consequence systems with clear sanctions;
- using withdrawal of students from class and withdrawal areas; and
- using report systems.

It was commented that:

- early engagement and development of relationships with parents, before their child transitioned from primary school to secondary school, was seen as extremely positive;
- the Respect agenda, used by Acklam Grange School, placed responsibility on its student body to take ownership of their actions and to overtly think about how their actions affected everyone around them;
- there was a need for school staff to model and reinforce good behaviour;
- in Middlesbrough there was a number of support systems and networks,

which could be accessed by schools to enable them to meet the needs of their pupils;

- the willingness of schools to invest greatly in providing pastoral support seemingly impacted on how successful they were in managing behaviour; and
- providing access to mental health and therapeutic support was key to the promotion of positive mental health and supporting pupils with particular needs.

The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that work had been undertaken to define a data sharing agreement with schools, which allowed for non-statutory levels of information to be shared amongst the school community. One of the successes that had been developed was a transition document, which was led by primary schools and fed into secondary schools. The document provided secondary schools with in-depth knowledge of the pupils they were due to receive in Year 7. The document provided information on what had made the pupil successful in primary school and what support was required to ensure they remained successful in education. It was commented that the work had now been extended to take place for children transitioning from nursery to primary education. Information sharing between all settings planned to ensure that pupils were successful in their learning and education.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that, from experience, rewards systems were always more successful in managing behaviour than sanctions.

Members heard that consequence systems provided a staggered response when dealing with poor behaviour in the classroom. Each level within the system carried with it a more severe sanction. Those systems aimed to provide pupils with the opportunity to change their behaviour when it was at low level. It was commented that there was a need to ensure that consequence systems were applied fairly and consistently. It was also added that consequence systems appeared to be most successful when paired with reward systems. However, if there was disparity in how those systems were applied by teachers, they could be counterproductive.

Withdrawal systems involved a pupil being removed from the classroom for a certain period of time, to enable them to reflect on their behaviour, before they were reintegrated. Approaches varied, however, successful withdrawal systems always ensured pupils were treated with dignity and respect.

Report systems were used to enable teachers to comment on the behaviour of certain pupils throughout the school day. Those comments were then often showed to the Head of Year and/or parent/s. It was added that report systems, which were delivered in a positive way, could be effective.

In respect of best practice in secondary schools, Members heard that the following strategies had been implemented:

- providing bespoke Alternative Provision (AP) opportunities;
- delivering PROCLAIM – a trauma Informed approach;
- investing in staff training - quality of teaching; and
- creating a culture of high expectations and high support.

Two schools had mentioned either having or developing their own AP opportunities. Acklam Grange School had its own off-site provision, which was managed by the school and provided pupils (at risk of exclusion) with the opportunity to work in a different place and in a smaller group on key skills, for a short period of time. The provision had a positive roadmap to ensure reintegration of the pupil back into the mainstream setting. It was commented that The King's Academy was currently developing Alternative Provision (AP) opportunities. The development of AP

opportunities was seen as extremely positive and assisted in ensuring the delivery of a varied curriculum to meet the needs of pupils.

It was commented that Acklam Grange had been involved with a project called PROCLAIM (Providing Rich Opportunities for Children who are Looked After in Middlesbrough) with the aim of becoming one of the first 'Trauma Informed' schools in the town. The project had seen whole school training and more focused training for ARC teams to understand the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the sense of belonging for a young person.

Members heard that schools invested greatly in delivering staff training to upskill teachers and other school staff.

It was advised that commonly, poor behaviour was a result of poor teaching. Fun, dynamic and engaging teaching helped to prevent poor behaviour. It was commented that poor behaviour outcomes could be addressed by a school revisiting its curriculum, approaches and teaching styles.

The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that all schools in Middlesbrough had engaged positively with the Local Authority to address behavioural issues. From a primary perspective, the Local Authority encouraged and funded primary schools to undertake Thrive programme, which was delivered by Priory Woods. Thrive was a classroom intervention whereby class-based colleagues were trained to recognise the triggers that a child may be present before episodes of poor behaviour. The intervention had proved to be successful.

It was advised that in terms of Park End Primary School:

- behaviour was underpinned by a universal offer, as described in the school's submitted report, and was coupled with equality and early intervention meaning that behaviour was good.
- The Head actively engaged with networks and safeguarding practice in school was excellent.

Members heard that Park End Primary School was one of Middlesbrough's secure schools. It was evident that the school's behaviour policy was successful, as 91% of Year 1 pupils had achieved the required phonics standard in 2020, which was 20% of above the national average. Anecdotally, behaviour was good and the pandemic had not negatively impacted on the school. In addition, innovative ways of engaging with parents had been established and the school had accessed funding from the Local Authority to deliver enrichment activities throughout the Easter holidays.

A Member expressed concern in respect of information provided by one particular school, which referenced the proportion of Looked After Children and later stated that "those students naturally presented greater challenges than others due to the particular circumstances of their backgrounds and the level of family support possible for them." The Member challenged the statement and questioned why poor behaviour was natural/expected for particular cohorts. The Member also challenged the analogy used by one particular school, that it had "a melting pot of race, culture and religion". The Member commented that cultural differences should be acknowledged, valued and celebrated.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision commented that language used by schools was extremely important and stereotypical views/statements pertaining to any cohort or group should be avoided. It was commented that in the past, schools had been challenged and stereotyping or casual language was unhelpful and could impact on pupil outcomes.

The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that the Corporate Parenting

Board could progress the issue of stereotypical language, with the assistance of the school safeguarding leads.

A discussion ensued and comments were made on the importance of language and the damage and detrimental impact that negative language could cause by changing perceptions and attitudes. There was a need for all school staff to be mindful of the language used and how it could be interpreted.

The Director of Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that due to current pressures on schools in light of the Coronavirus pandemic and pupils only returning on 8 March, Heads had requested to submit written evidence rather than attend the meeting in person. Therefore, as Heads were not in attendance, they were unable to expand, elaborate or clarify issues raised in respect of the evidence submitted. Therefore, clarity would be sought on the points raised by Members on the use of language.

In respect of the causes of pupil behaviour problems, Outwood Academy Acklam had commented that there had been a number of pupils with unidentified SEND. A Member requested data on the issue. The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised the Local Authority was looking to recruit a SEND Advisor, who would work within schools to address any attainment gaps across primary and secondary sectors. It was added that, in 2019, 21% of the student population had SEND. Further work would be undertaken to track the attainment of SEND pupils and record information and data in respect of SEND pupils with EHCPs and those without. The SEND Advisor would also look at the quality of education for the SEND cohort.

A Member queried whether there was sufficient funding to support pupils with SEND. The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that the Local Authority had been involved with a consultation in respect of high needs funding, received by schools, from the Department of Education (DfE). It was hoped that the outcome of the consultation process would result in a 1.2% increase in funding.

A Member raised a query in respect of staff training and support provided to those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that work was being undertaken to reshape the role of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) Manager to become an interfacing role with schools. With that change, it was envisaged that the EMAT would visit schools to actively work with classroom practitioners to develop the level of support offered to EAL pupils. The service level agreement would remain, enabling schools to buy-in bespoke packages of teaching support for their pupils. The role of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) Manager would be more focused on upskilling and reviewing and monitoring the impact of training.

A Member commented on the importance of providing effective training to school-based practitioners to enable them to develop their knowledge of different cultures, religions and races and ensure they could effectively support BAME pupils and address language barriers.

Members also heard that Middlesbrough SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) advised Middlesbrough Council on religious education in schools.

The scrutiny panel heard that the Advisory Team was being restructured to plan, devise and deliver effective training, to meet the specific needs of schools. It was also planned that the peer-to-peer model would be reintroduced to ensure that expertise and best practice was shared.

A Member commented that the following information would be welcomed:

- details of how schools addressed academic and online bullying; and
- an update on the impact of restorative practice.

#### **AGREED**

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

#### 20/5 **BEHAVIOUR, DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS - WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS (PART 2)**

See previous item. Part 1 and 2 were considered collectively.

#### 20/6 **EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY**

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised that:

- All pupils had returned to school on Monday 8 March 2021.
- The funding received for laptops had been distributed to schools.
- The number of vulnerable children who had returned to school was high.
- There were currently some members of school staff and pupils self-isolating.
- In order to track Middlesbrough's vulnerable children more effectively, the Local Authority had recently secured funding for Welfare Call. Welfare Call was a platform that provided daily attendance and attainment monitoring of vulnerable cohorts.
- Covid-19 testing of school pupils was going well.
- In conjunction with Public Health, Children Services had been arranging delivery of enrichment activities during the school holidays by utilising funding provided by the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF).
- Good relationships continued between the Local Authority and schools.

#### **NOTED**

#### 20/7 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

With regards to recent meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Chair advised that:

- On 27 January, the Board had received information on the budget consultation.
- On 29 January, the Board had considered the Call-in in respect of the disposal of Nunthorpe Grange Farm.
- On 11 February, the Board had considered the Executive Forward Work Programme, Middlesbrough Council's Response to COVID-19, an update from the Executive Member for Regeneration, the Final Report from the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel on Social Cohesion and Integration and updates from the Scrutiny Panel Chairs.
- On 11 March, the Board had considered the Executive Forward Work Programme; an update from the Mayor; Middlesbrough Council's Response to COVID-19; the Final Report from Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel on Pest Control Services; the Final Report from the Health Scrutiny Panel on Opioid Dependency: What Happens Next?; the Overview and Scrutiny Board Call-in Outcome on the disposal of Nunthorpe Grange Farm and updates from the Scrutiny Panel Chairs.

#### **NOTED**