
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 19 April 2021.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: C Nicholson

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

20/29 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/30 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 22 MARCH 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 22 March 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/31 **BEHAVIOUR, DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS - EVIDENCE FROM NORTH ORMESBY PRIMARY ACADEMY**

At the meeting, the scrutiny panel received further evidence in respect of its topic of Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools.

The Head of North Ormesby Primary Academy (NOPA) was in attendance to present information on the successful and proactive strategies and solutions used to prevent and tackle bullying.

It was advised that NOPA was a Centre for Excellence for Inclusion and was also in the running to be an Inclusion Quality Mark flagship school.

The Head of NOPA advised that the school had 250 pupils on its roll, just over 60% of pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium funding and approximately 40% had English as an additional language (EAL) or were an international new arrival (INA). It was commented that, some INAs 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% of pupils would be eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

The school had just over 17% of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In terms of annual mobility, that was approximately 70%, taking into account the pupils that started or left the school within a year.

Members heard that over the past 5 years, there had been three fixed-term exclusions, two of those had been for the same pupil who was now attending Holmwood School. No pupils had been permanently excluded.

The scrutiny panel was advised that there were three values at the school, which encompassed everything the school did and those were:

- Tolerance and Acceptance - tolerating, accepting and celebrating everyone's differences;
- Innovative and Immersion - providing innovative and immersive learning for all; and
- Scholastic Excellence - promoting scholastic excellence through the all-round development of each and every child.

The Head outlined the NOPA teaching approach, which included:

- high expectations for children;
- striving for depth in learning;
- creativity and innovation, including children taking leadership and ownership;
- independence and interdependence, being able to work alone and in groups;
- a balanced diet;
- an offer for all, which was crucial when considering behaviour and discipline;
- a love of learning and a love for challenge; and
- teaching excellence.

The school had a remarkable offer, which included:

- Teaching and learning support e.g. every child would have access to - challenging activities, becoming an expert in e-safety and leadership roles etc.
- Pastoral support e.g. every child would have access to speech and learning support, a magic breakfast club, CAMHS, Social Services and the Bungalow Project etc.

The scrutiny panel was shown several images of classrooms at NOPA, which included creative and interactive displays for the children. The classrooms were set up to coincide with the topics that were taught, ensuring that children were excited to learn, e.g. a Victorian living room and a seaside theme that included a boat, sand and a parasol. Each classroom also had flexible seating arrangements and learning environments, which included breakfast bars, reading lofts, exercise bikes, standing desks, bean bags etc.

There were areas in school that supported the development of expertise in certain areas, those included:

- The Thrive Room, which was a safe and calm environment that encouraged mindfulness;
- The STEM Suite, which focused on technology, engineering, mathematics and science;
- The NOPA Library, which encouraged reading and story time;
- The NOPA Lab, which focussed on science; and
- The NOPA Art Studio, which would be available from September 2021 and would focus on arts and crafts.

The school grounds had Magic Weaver's Garden, a storyteller caravan, a learning village and a forest school.

The school was a huge advocate of the use of technology and addressing the digital skills gap. The school had invested in iPads, meaning that every child from Nursery upwards to Year 6 had a 1:1 iPad. Reception and Year 1 pupils also had iPads that were kept at home to improve accessibility and enable them to access different learning styles and ensure learning was personalised.

The scrutiny panel was shown a video about Tim, the school's mascot. Tim represented the school, set an example as the school's star pupil and encouraged the children to make their best, even better. Tim was a star pupil because he was always on time; he looked after others, himself and the school; he always listened to and respected others opinions; he loved a new challenge; he always did his homework and he always tried his best, no matter what.

Following an inspection of the school, Ofsted had commented that "There is no reliance on reward systems; instead pupils are expected to develop an intrinsic desire to behave and learn well. They do this by looking up to the academy mascot 'TIM', who is the perfect pupil. Pupils constantly try to copy his positive attitudes, resilience and determination. This imaginative approach to behaviour management is extremely successful".

The scrutiny panel heard that 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. 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'.
- Thrive - three members of staff had been through intensive 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.
- Challenge - exposing children to challenging learning and the strategies required to solve tough problems.

The school encouraged responsibility and ownership, by having:

- learning leaders;
- digital ambassadors;
- sports leaders;
- mini Police;
- a school council;
- anti-bullying ambassadors; and
- classroom monitors.

The scrutiny panel was shown a video, demonstrating how the school supported children to find their remarkable. A pupil had a passion for singing, therefore, the school gave the pupil the opportunity to write and perform her own song, recorded her performance and posted it on the school's YouTube channel. The school also encouraged her to attend singing clubs and enter competitions.

In terms of the NOPA curriculum, the school focussed on passions and pathways involving:

- specialist provision, including specialist organisations, specialists, parents/carers, higher education and professional partners.
- school enrichment, including lunchtime clubs, showcases, performances, home learning, certification, competitions, specialist teaching, after school clubs, visits/visitors, masterclasses and workshops.

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. Restorative practice encouraged people to take responsibility for their actions, and repair any harm that they had caused. Its use had been found to reduce behaviour problems, improve achievement levels, and develop emotional literacy.

The restorative practice approach focussed on:

- relationships;
- social capital;
- the power of conversation;
- dedicating time;
- being solution-focused; and
- time to reflect.

The school referred to filling positive and negative buckets and it was explained to children that to fill a positivity bucket, the flow of water was extremely slow, but to fill a negativity bucket, the flow of water was really fast. The school aimed daily to fill the positivity bucket for each child.

In terms of community power and early intervention, the school worked with parents, the Parent Community Advisory Board (PCAB), Cleveland Police and Police Community Support

Officers (PCSOs), the local community hub and the local church.

In terms of celebrating success, children could earn 'TIMs' for good/positive behaviour, the school had a weekly celebration assembly, an attendance system called NOPALY where classes could accumulate money and if they gained the largest sum they had the opportunity to spin the NOPA Wheel of Fortune for a reward. There were lots of in-class opportunities to celebrate success. It was commented that in respect of celebrating success, balance was key.

In response to a Member's query, the Head explained that at NOPA, the word 'bullying' was not used as it had damaging connotations and misconceptions when children sometimes merely had a disagreement, which was resolved swiftly.

In respect of the school's values, a Member queried the use of the term 'tolerance'. The Head explained that the word tolerance was used alongside the word acceptance, which provided a counterbalance and, given the high levels of mobility associated with the school, was considered appropriate.

In response to a Member's query regarding incidences of bullying at NOPA, the Head commented that there had been no incidences at the school.

In response to a Member's query regarding collaboration with other schools, the Head advised that the school continued to be a beacon of practice and was involved in the Trust's working groups, focussing on issues such as diversity and inclusion. In addition, NOPA worked with other schools in the borough to share best practice, for instance - as a Centre of Excellence for Inclusion, other schools had visited NOPA to receive information on practices adopted by the school.

The Head of Achievement, Education, Prevention and Partnerships advised that the school provided a welcoming environment and each child was provided with excellent academic and pastoral support. It was added that the Head and members of school staff provided an outstanding friendly, caring and supportive environment that encouraged children to fully learn and develop into well-rounded pupils. Children were intrinsically motivated to be like the school mascot, Tim, who demonstrated all the traits required to prepare young people for the wider world. The Executive Director for Children's Services also commended the school on the support it provided to vulnerable pupils.

AGREED

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

20/32

EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY

As part of the update on Covid-19 recovery, the Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision provided information on the Vulnerable Children's Attendance Project. Members heard that the project was a pilot being delivered by Children's Services to trial an innovative approach to protecting children and improving attendance at school.

The project was aimed at those children open to social care, i.e. Children in Need, Children in Need of Protection and Children in Care. There was a need to ensure that those children did not miss out on their education as they may have become exposed to a greater risk of harm, as attending school was a protective factor.

To proactively manage the attendance of those vulnerable pupils, the Local Authority had commissioned an external company, Welfare Call, to track the attendance of all children in the target groups every day. That data would then be made available to social workers and their managers via a cloud based portal. Real time and robust attendance data/information, and the ability to report on attendance trends of individual children and schools would enable social workers to intervene more quickly and in a more informed and targeted way.

The scrutiny panel was advised that an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) would be employed to engage directly with children, families and schools. The EWO would build relationships, unpick problems and breakdown the barriers that were preventing attendance. The EWO would also be able to get 'eyes on' the child to carry out the initial welfare check.

In terms of timescales, schools would be briefed and the EWO would start work the week commencing 19 April 2021. It was planned that Welfare Call would 'go live' by 4 May 2021.

A Member queried why the service was not going to be provided in-house. In response, the Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that Welfare Call had a web-based portal, which was a specialist application and allowed data to be stored, controlled and monitored securely. Welfare Call would provide the attendance data to enable the Local Authority to provide a robust and rapid response to attendance instantly, however, if the service was to be provided 'in-house' there would be a delay with its implementation.

The Executive Director of Children's Services explained that the tracking and monitoring of attendance of vulnerable pupils was a significant focus of the Department of Education.

A Member commented that, following the implementation of Welfare Call, it would be beneficial for the scrutiny panel to receive an update on its impact.

In terms of Covid-19, the Executive Director of Children's Services advised that the Local Authority was moving into the recovery stage. Currently, five members of staff and 14 pupils were isolating from one school.

NOTED

20/33

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Board last met on 8 April and at that meeting the Board had considered the Executive Forward Work Programme, Middlesbrough Council's Response to COVID-19, an Executive Member Update from the Executive Member for Communities and Education, the Strategic Plan 2020-23 - Progress at Quarter Three 2020-21, the Revenue and Capital Budget - Projected Outturn Position as at Quarter Three 2020/21 and updates from the Scrutiny Panel Chairs.

NOTED