

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board held on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Frank Jonas BEM
 Terry Norton
 Jeanette Smith
 Judith Smyth

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education, PCC
Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years, Education, PCC
Fiona Calderbank and Steve Labedz, Joint Chairs of the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) Strategic Board

28. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rob Sanders and Helen Reeder. Sarah Christopher (Portsmouth Education Partnership & Inclusion Manager) and Alison Jeffery (Director of Children, Families and Education) would join the meeting later as they had another commitment.

29. Declarations of interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is a governor at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through a cover agency, his partner is employed at Mayfield School and his daughter attends it. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she works for Hampshire branch Unison and represents support staff in Hampshire schools. Debbie Anderson works as an Ofsted inspector but not in Portsmouth schools.

30. Minutes of previous meeting - 15 July 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

31. School improvement

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years, presented the report and highlighted the main points. As there were no statutory assessments/tests/exams in the previous academic year due to Covid-19 there were no performance data dashboards to help support the prioritisation of school improvement support for maintained schools. Therefore, schools need clear and transparent criteria so they can see how support is prioritised.

Criteria included the imminence of Ofsted inspections and new school leadership. Previous performance information and consistent trends could be considered; for example, a three-year downward trend, or anomalies where schools perform well in some areas but not in others. Ms Anderson will be reviewing the school improvement plans of maintained schools and will be looking to secure school improvement support from external sources that can benefit all schools in the city. An example of this is the opportunity to secure funding via the Hastings Opportunity Area and a potential twinning project focusing on literacy.

Ms Anderson confirmed that the PEP School Improvement Board has become the School Leadership and Effectiveness Board which has a focus on school leadership acknowledging that school leadership is key to improving standards in the city.

The Chair suggested that not having the dashboards may be a silver lining as it could be an opportunity to re-assess improvement strategies. The importance of leadership is crucial in setting the tone; a number of previously failing schools have dramatically improved with good leadership.

In response to questions from members, the following points were made.

With regard to effectiveness of school improvement with only Debbie Anderson in post, the Chair noted that the school improvement team had been reduced due to more schools becoming academies. Mr Stoneman said the £55 to £60,000 government funding allocated to school improvement was very little. Ms Anderson was responsible for statutory responsibilities for maintained schools as well as for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Music Service and Early Years. The key was to getting the most from the collective resource available in the city and to capitalise on other opportunities such as the Hastings Opportunity Area twinning project and the potential of the Regional Teaching School Hubs that will be established next year.

With regard to having confidence in accurate results in view of the gaps in learning, officers explained they could not use 2020 results so had to use past trends. Although schools were invited to submit data to support the preparation of school profiles, they were for schools' sole use. When considering performance information the last three years have to be considered. Changes of leadership and the ongoing use of remote learning and the Catch-Up Premium also need to be considered. Fiona Calderbank said grades at her schools were not inflated. She sent the results of two sets of mocks to the Fisher Family Trust and used the algorithm. Schools who inflated grades would only face problems later on. Mr Stoneman assured members the local authority was not "taking the foot off the pedal" in aspiring to provide high quality education, as reflected in the Portsmouth Education Strategy.

The Chair noted it was heartening to hear schools talking about teaching and learning, despite the current Covid-19 crisis.

RESOLVED members of the Education Advisory Board note the school improvement prioritisation and support for 2020-21.

32. Response to Covid-19

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education, presented the report. Section 3 covered action taken after lockdown and Section 4 showed action taken since the previous meeting. Many of the workstreams established in the summer have been retained and merged into the PEP structures.

The Infection Control and Health & Safety group's stepped up work includes a support package comprising guidance, resources, template letters in the event of local outbreaks or lockdowns, which was sent to schools before term started.

Officers worked with Corporate Communications on the Welcome Back to School campaign. The Miss School Miss Out campaign was put on hold until after the autumn half-term. Attendance figures are better than expected with the majority of schools having over 95% attendance. 280 children have not returned to school, half of whom are known to Children's Services and Early Health and have a lead professional. Officers are working with schools via LA Link Co-ordinators to support this work. There is also a focus on elective home education (EHE) and a spike in requests with the aim of avoiding unsuitable EHE which is likely to lead a return to school. All schools are implementing the protocol. Compared with other local authorities in the South East Portsmouth is doing well in reducing the number of children who are inappropriately being home educated. Resources for schools and frontline staff working with families were distributed shortly before the start of term. Tracking and monitoring of vulnerable children not at school continues. Existing staff who were deployed into tracking roles have returned to their regular jobs so three full-time LA Education Link Co-ordinators will be employed with effect from November. Many schools used the Welcome Back templates but are now moving to how to support the remaining children to return to school. A bespoke wellbeing support package was developed from one used in Medway.

There is a weekly communications update to schools every Friday, a weekly PEP bulletin, fortnightly meetings with headteachers and Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT), and half-termly meetings with maintained schools.

Ms Calderbank noted that the gap between the pupil premium and normal attendance has grown four times so it is pupil premium attendance that has been affected and might need investigating.

In response to questions from members, the following points were made.

Mr Stoneman felt Portsmouth was prepared as well as could be for a second wave of Covid-19 or an immediate lockdown. It will be in a much better position as it will have the LA Link Co-ordinators in place and has already done work on digital and home learning, for example, where children have had to self-isolate due to a positive case in schools. Ms Calderbank noted that

by 22 October schools have a legal requirement to provide remote learning that is in line with the curriculum, not previous work.

With regard to schools being able to manage if school staff were waiting for tests or are overloaded with work, some schools had particularly felt the strain and as infection rates rise it will be more challenging. At the moment schools are managing but officers are under no illusions as rates rise.

Ms Calderbank and Mr Ladedz had both removed non-essential duties from teachers at their schools but creaks are starting to show. A school in Gosport has seven supply teachers and there is a five-day wait for test results. Some classes were doubled-up which is permissible as long the children are in a bigger bubble; half-term will be welcome. Mr Ladedz said waiting time for tests had stabilised but across the country generally staff absence is worse in November and February. Fewer schools are using supply teachers because of the risks that presents in terms of transmission of the virus. Portsmouth schools have managed very well so far but it is worrying how they will manage to cope to Christmas. Despite the unpredictable circumstances staff are committed to wanting children to do well. League tables for 2021 will be pointless so the focus is on seeing what children can achieve.

Sarah Christopher and Alison Jeffery joined the meeting at 4.45 pm.

Sarah Christopher, PEP and School Inclusion Manager, described the support available to schools. A pack with links and resources had been sent to all schools. Education is aware of the need to support headteachers. The government Wellbeing for Education Return grant is being used for initiatives such as using former headteachers who know Portsmouth well to provide a safe space for support; educational psychologists are available for ad hoc confidential conversations; training is to be made available to all schools on staff looking after their own wellbeing so they can look after the children.

The Chair requested her thanks to Mike Stoneman, Alison Jeffery and all Education staff to be placed on record. She had heard positive feedback from schools about the return to school.

RESOLVED members of the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken over the past six months by the council and partners to respond to the pandemic and the ongoing work that is in place in order to continue to support education settings.

33. Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education, introduced the report, noting that the strategy had incorporated much of the work of the last six months and many of the priorities were Covid-19 related. Some consultation has taken place though not as much as was originally planned pre-Covid. The aim is to publish the strategy the following week. It will be delivered under the auspices of the PEP. The merger of the MATs Strategic Forum with the PEP Strategic Board is a welcome development as MATs (there are 11 in Portsmouth) have an important role in sharing their expertise. Mr Stoneman outlined the nine

priorities. Inclusion, Early Years and post-16 will continue to be a central theme running through all the priorities. Key points to note from the nine priorities were as follows:

1. Sue Samson, Chief Executive of the University of Chichester Academy Trust, has agreed to chair the School Leadership and Effectiveness Board. Andrew Olive, former chair of School Improvement Board, will continue to be part of the new Board.
2. A digital learning pioneers' group has been created by building on work done in the summer on remote access. The Thinking Schools Academy Trust has been commissioned to support this work with Natalie Sheppard, TSAT's Director of Education for Portsmouth in the lead. Until now Alison Bradley, a senior HMI seconded to Portsmouth, led a digital and home learning group. Since September officers have refined what schools need for digital learning; they do not want schools to be left behind. The first of a series of webinars was on safeguarding and the dangers of remote learning. Others have covered hybrid and flipped teaching; flipped teaching is where the teacher is at home and the pupils are at school. Secondary schools are more used to digital learning as the students are older and more independent but infant and primary schools might need more support. It was noted that there is a requirement for all schools to have remote learning plans in place by 22 October. Work is also taking place to ensure disadvantaged children have access to devices and the internet, including an initiative with Shaping Portsmouth and employer members.
3. Despite the focus on literacy maths is still important and there have been some successes with maths through the Solent Maths Hub. However, there are still significant issues with literacy and early language and this will be a key priority in 2020/21.
4. Simon Barrable, Principal of Portsmouth College, is chair of the ITT, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Group. Since Covid-19 there has been renewed interest in teaching as a career and most ITT providers are reporting an increase in numbers but work is still needed to attract and retain the best teachers.
5. The Infection Control and Health & Safety Group builds on the work done in the summer. It is chaired by Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health, and will continue for the foreseeable future.
6. Safeguarding is a new priority following two schools being judged by Ofsted as inadequate due to safeguarding and weaknesses identified in some schools' completion of the Safeguarding and Early Help Compact Audit tool.
7. Sarah Christopher reported that funding has now been secured for a third Mental Health Support Team so that all schools in the city will be supported. Portsmouth may now be one of the few areas in the country with full coverage across schools.

8. There have been some improvements with attendance and reductions in exclusions last year. The attendance campaign Miss School Miss Out is likely to resume after half-term and some elements have returned, for example, penalty notices for holidays taken in term-time. The focus to date has been on welcoming back pupils and tracking and monitoring vulnerable children and young people, supported by the LA Education Link Co-ordinators.
9. There has been a significant expansion of primary school places and now the focus is on expanding secondary school places. The most significant and challenging area of work, however, is meeting the demand for children with complex special educational needs. Education is working on an inclusive strategy of expanding special school places but also supporting mainstream schools to become more inclusive. Meeting the demand has significant revenue funding challenges. The review of SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) accommodation review will be completed in November and will form the basis of a 3-5 year capital strategy for SEND and AP. This has already helped to inform a capital bid to members. .

Ms Calderbank noted the government was saving money on bursaries for new teachers as they realised more people were now interested in teaching; for example, the bursary for some science subjects had reduced from £30,000 to £7,000 and from £15,000 to zero for geography.

In response to questions from members, the following points were made.

With regard to the quality of new teachers and what type of applicants are being sought, the Chair said Teach Portsmouth was definitely having an impact; the first of a series webinars will give the opportunity to meet newly qualified teachers. Communications are designed to reach as many people as possible. She knew people who had become good teachers after other careers; however, members agreed it was important to attract teachers who are sufficiently resilient, not those who have no other plans.

Mr Stoneman said the first monthly Teach Portsmouth e-newsletter was published last week and there will be a teacher recruitment survey after half-term to establish the baseline on recruitment and vacancies. He would be happy to share the results with the Board.

Ms Anderson explained families had been surveyed to see what devices they had, particularly amongst younger children or multiple siblings, which showed where help was needed. Alison Critchley, Education & Business Partnerships Manager, is working with a digital donation scheme where devices are wiped and re-distributed. Ms Calderbank said about 15 Year 11 pupils had no devices but now there is only one as over the summer parents had obtained devices. Her school had purchased Chromebooks for pupils. Mr Stoneman mentioned 1:1 subscription models, which parents pay for but schools can fund some of the costs via the pupil premium. Mr Labeledz said about 15% of 2,000 pupils had no regular access to devices; the position is about three to four times worse in disadvantaged families. As a Trust they provided access by investing funding from other projects but have since switched to a

subscription model where disadvantaged families have a Chromebook for an annual subscription of £10. Schools need to make this level of investment to provide digital access. Members noted it could be difficult for parents to support digital learning where children have different devices in the same household.

Mr Labedz's view, as Co-Chair of PEP, was that retention was a bigger issue than recruitment. Payments after two, four or six years and staff development were more effective than "bribery" for people who were inappropriate as teachers. He acknowledged that existing school staff such as learning support assistants could be encouraged to become teachers and there is much support in place, for example, subject enhancement. Some very good teachers had had other roles in schools. There are several different routes into teaching, including without a degree, but complicated training models can deter people.

The Chair commended the model of training local people who can gain a degree while working; Teach Portsmouth could highlight it specifically.

Sarah Christopher explained that in Portsmouth the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) sit within CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) so there is a very clear link between them. The MHSTs are school based so referrals come through schools rather than self-referrals. They are still at an early stage and support is currently allocated according to school size and the free school meal headcount. Officers are working with the Children's Emotional Health & Wellbeing Group to consider a fair and transparent way of allocating resources when there is additional capacity in January. Currently secondary schools have on average at least one day per week of support and smaller schools have a half-day fortnightly. The MHSTs will recruit and support Youth Mental Health Ambassadors, reducing pressure on schools. There will be individual as well as group work based around evidence based interventions like CBT for issues such as anxiety and transitions. The MHSTs will have links with educational psychologists through a partnership group also comprising CAMHS, school nursing and early help.

Mr Stoneman advised that the building work in priority 9 had all been completed; there were slight delays to the Admiral Lord Nelson School work. Councillor Jonas said parents had been very positive and asked for thanks to be passed on to the headteachers of Admiral Lord Nelson and Mayfield Schools.

Members thought the strategy was very comprehensive. Mr Stoneman said that an updated version to be published the following week will include a revised section in the introduction on early years and language. Comments on the strategy, especially on Early Years and post-16 education, can be sent to Mr Stoneman. The final version will be circulated to Board Members.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board endorse the final draft of the Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023.

34. Dates of future meetings

Members of the Board noted the dates of the next meetings as follows (location to be confirmed):

- Wednesday 10 February 2021 at 4 pm
- Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 4 pm

The meeting concluded at 5.30 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair