

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board held remotely on Monday, 18 July 2022 at 4.00 pm

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Rob Sanders, Deputy Director, Anglican Diocese of Portsmouth

7. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ryan Brent and Tom Coles, Robert Dare (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Helen Reeder (National Education Union).

8. Declarations of interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is Vice-Chair of the governing body at Craneswater Junior School.

9. Minutes of previous meeting held on 21 March 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

10. Support and challenge to LA maintained schools

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years, introduced the report, noting that feedback from schools on support and training around inspection was positive - "a good level of challenge for us all." Ms Anderson highlighted the following points:

- Schools, especially primary schools, have become out of practice at submitting judgements for teacher assessment so further training and support needs to be relevant and timely.
- The safeguarding sampling visits (looking at some aspects of safeguarding) are not a tick list and schools have found them quite challenging but useful and there can never be complacency about safeguarding.
- The reference to early reading in paragraph 4.7 refers to pupils who are struggling with reading in secondary schools and does not mean Early Years pupils.
- There are huge caveats when looking at performance data this year.

Councillor Horton said all credit was due to Ms Anderson and her team; it should not be forgotten how difficult emerging from the pandemic was when many children had not been in school for a long time. In particular, there were

challenges around "school readiness" and anxiety. Education had taken an understanding but challenging approach.

Mike Stoneman said Education's relationship with the 18 LA maintained schools was as strong and productive as he had ever known it and feedback was positive. However, schools were slightly nervous about the White Paper and academisation. An LA trust has been mentioned but there are no updates on this. Education was keeping an eye on one or two schools but overall it is a positive picture.

In response to a question from Robert Sanders, officers said the vast majority of schools were in a strong and steady place. In November 2021 a school had a Section 8 inspection which does not change its grade but had an Outcome 3, which means it might not have received its current grade of Good if the inspection had been a Section 5. Education are working with the school to provide intensive support; it also has a new headteacher from September 2022.

Councillor Horton noted literacy was a constant and more important than ever. As a school governor and former primary teacher she was very impressed with the learning walk she had taken as part of the Destination Reader project. Officers are working with the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) Early Language & Literacy Development Group which had met recently to consider where to focus next. Consensus was that oracy (language and vocabulary development) is the overarching umbrella focus for next year; as well as being important for literacy it helps with relational practice.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken to support and challenge LA Maintained schools since the last report.

11. Response to Covid 19

Alison Critchley, Head of Sufficiency and Resources, introduced the report, noting that Covid infection rates are currently rising and there is still significant disruption to schools. During the pandemic there was a significant cost to staff to ensure there was a competent body in front of children every day. Covid and its impact have not gone away but children still need literacy skills to proceed to the next stage of education; they also need support for their emotional wellbeing. In addition, there may be retention issues for the workforce. When the PEP considers its plan for next year retention as well as attendance, attainment and wellbeing will be priorities.

Councillor Horton thought it was very much a sense of living alongside Covid as it has not gone away. The report is a fascinating document and portrays very well the actions taken during the pandemic. It also summarises the work Education is doing in the face of the post-pandemic legacy. As there may be infection spikes it is not known if this will be the last regular Covid report or if updates will be included in other reports.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note:

1. the actions that have been taken 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;
2. that in line with the council's wider arrangements for responding to coronavirus the Infection Control in Schools group is being stood down. The new Portsmouth City Council health protection board, which will meet quarterly, will have education representation, including from schools;
3. that, while we are not anticipating significant disruption to children's education due to Covid directly, the effects of the pandemic on children and education are likely to continue to be felt for some time to come.

12. Ofsted school inspections update

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education, introduced the report, noting that since it had been written there had been two more inspections: St John's Catholic Primary was inspected the previous week and Flying Bull Academy will be inspected on 19 and 20 July. The majority of final reports have not been published yet so officers cannot give more details at this stage. Mr Stoneman pointed out an error in Table 1 in that Devonshire Infant is an LA maintained school, not part of the University of Chichester MAT.

In response to questions from members, officers explained that Section 5 and 8 inspections both take place over two days (though Section 8 inspections used to be shorter); the methodology and areas of emphasis are different; it is not a scaled down section 5. From September Section 5 will be known as a "graded inspection" and Section 8 as an "ungraded inspection" as it is not a full inspection and is not changing the grade.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the report.

13. Update on Priority Education Investment Areas

Mike Stoneman gave a verbal update and explained there were 55 education investment areas which would receive targeted support where attainment and performance were less than satisfactory. Portsmouth was one of them and in February was designated as one of 12 new priority areas (the only one in the South East); there are also the 12 existing opportunity areas. The designation puts the spotlight on Portsmouth and there are a range of requirements but it means further investment in education.

The PEP will play a pivotal role. A sub-group of its Strategic Board has to complete a data led needs analysis by the end of September and a detailed delivery plan by the end of November, which will outline the key priorities over the next three years. The local needs fund will be £42 million spread across the 24 priority areas. Education will need to demonstrate with evidence-based programmes how it will use the funding. Officers and the PEP have done considerable groundwork already and have asked the DfE if it will accept current structures; at the moment this seems likely. Officers have been given a strong steer that academisation will feature. Mr Stoneman has queried the

purpose of academisation as a priority as the majority of schools are part of a MAT and the schools where the greatest concerns lie are part of a MAT. Mr Stoneman explained this is not a criticism of MATs - it was recognised that those schools with performance issues had already been transferred to MATs. Officers are considering a draft paper they have received. He confirmed there is only one standalone academy trust in Portsmouth - the UTC Portsmouth, which is graded Outstanding.

Frances Soul noted that an extraordinary meeting of the PEP's Strategic Board last Friday afternoon was well attended. The Board will engage fully as so much of the investment area's priorities align with what it was doing already. Mr Stoneman said the Board's membership is being extended to include representation from the Dioceses. Councillor Horton said the Board had served Portsmouth well as it was dealing with a very fragmented landscape. The criteria for coercing schools into becoming academies does not apply here. The PEP provides a strong structure and other areas of the country envy what Portsmouth does.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the update.

14. KS1 and KS2 results summary

Debbie Anderson gave a verbal update on KS1 and KS2 results, referring to the DfE Primary Accountability Measures but with the caveat of "huge health warnings" not to make direct comparisons with 2019 results, national averages and between schools because of the uneven impact of the pandemic on pupils. National and local authority averages were included in last week's communications bulletin with advice that comparisons are unhelpful.

Portsmouth is mirroring the national picture at KS2 in that combined (reading, writing, maths) results have decreased. Individual subject results nationally and locally have decreased but whereas the national average for reading has increased by 1% it has increased by 3% for Portsmouth, showing schools' hard work. The gap for Portsmouth with the national average has reduced from 6% to 4%. Despite the huge variations and the uneven effect of the pandemic it is important for schools to consider their own results, what the information is telling them and what they are doing about it. Even before Covid results varied.

There are no national averages for KS1 yet though Portsmouth's results in all areas have decreased. The Education Endowment Foundation report published in December 2021 studied the impact of Covid on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing. One finding was that as younger children are less able to learn independently they were disproportionately affected by school closures. Portsmouth's results will probably mirror the national picture which is not surprising in view of the disruption. There is no indication yet of comparators for next year's results.

Councillor Horton thanked officers for their reports.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the update.

The next meeting is on Monday 17 October at 4 pm; those present agreed to hold the meeting virtually.

The meeting concluded at 4.48 pm.

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Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair