

## **EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board held on Friday, 30 September 2016 at 3.30 pm in Conference Room A, Civic Offices, Portsmouth City Council

### **Present**

Councillor Neill Young (in the Chair)  
Alicia Denny  
Suzy Horton  
Will Purvis

### **Also Present**

Helen Reeder, Teacher Liaison Panel Representative  
Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services  
Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children's Services - Education

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Urszula Topp, Roman Catholic diocese representative.

Councillor Young advised that as Cllr J Ferrett had resigned from the Labour party earlier this week, the Labour group spokesperson position was vacant until the group appointed a new spokesperson.

#### **2. Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. Development of the Portsmouth Education Partnership and the transition to a schools led, self-improving system**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Education Advisory Board and circulated the terms of reference to everyone as a reminder of the Board's purpose. He explained that this Board replaced the former Schools Standards and Improvement Group and covers all areas of education from early years to post 16. It gives the opportunity for performance of the education department to be scrutinised to support the progression of children and young people in Portsmouth. The terms of reference would be reviewed in 3-4 meetings' time.

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director Children's Services - Education summarised each section of the report and members of the Board had the opportunity to ask questions after every section.

### **Background**

Mike advised that there had been a significant change over the last 6 months. The White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' set out the Government's commitment to a school led, self-improving system where every

school would become an academy by 2022 and it provided clarity on the LA's role. However, more recently there has been a softening of the policy so that instead of a blanket academy conversion, a conversion would only be forced where the Local Authority (LA) is deemed not to be meeting the minimum performance threshold across its schools or where it is clear the LA cannot viably support its remaining schools because a critical mass of schools in that area has converted. Due to the recent changes in Government, the Education for All Bill has been delayed. In the meantime a Green Paper has been issued regarding a consultation on proposals for selective (grammar) schools, removing the 50% cap on faith based admissions for new faith schools and giving the independent sector and HE a stronger role in sponsoring and supporting state schools.

### **Ofsted inspection**

An Ofsted inspection of the LA's arrangements for school improvement took place in February 2016, which whilst recognising the improvements that have been made in terms of education standards (the fact that the majority of schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or better), nevertheless listed that outcomes for children and young people were still behind the national average. Following this, the council issued an action plan. The action plan addresses 8 key areas for improvements which were summarised.

### **Portsmouth Education Partnership**

Mike advised that in recognition of the changing education landscape and the Ofsted inspection in February, discussions were held with headteachers, governors and MAT leaders about collective actions to address common issues facing all schools / academies in Portsmouth under the umbrella of a Partnership. The proposals would seek to build on existing collaboration and prevent the potential fragmentation of the system through academisation. Initial feedback during the summer indicated a strong appetite for this proposal. A formal consultation was launched on 5 September which will run until 21 October. Whilst the consultation has been running, partners have been moving quickly with the proposals. Shadow arrangements have been put in place including a shadow Strategic Board and shadow Operational Group. The Strategic Board has an independent chair and is due to meet on 18<sup>th</sup> October for its first meeting. The Operational Group is the engine behind the Board and has met already on 13<sup>th</sup> September and will meet again on 11<sup>th</sup> October. The Operational Group is undertaking an analysis of data to review initial performance in 2016, exploring possible priorities for support. This analysis will be shared with the Strategic Board on 18<sup>th</sup> October. The Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance has been contracted by the council for school improvement work with LA maintained schools, but as part of these partnership arrangements. Mike advised that the Operational Group would extend its work over time and it was likely that sub groups would be established to focus on other areas of work e.g. recruitment and retention for teachers, subject networks, attendance/exclusions, etc.

The formal launch of the Partnership is planned for 4<sup>th</sup> November at the Portsmouth Marriott Hotel.

Councillor Young said it was vital that members of the partnership are all on board to enable its success. The LA's role will change and the partnership will eventually need to take ownership through a schools-led approach. Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Social Care advised that the Deputy Regional Schools Commissioner is one of the members on the Strategic Board, which will help create a constructive and positive tone and culture.

Councillor Denny said the partnership was a great idea and asked about its accountability. Alison Jeffery said that the chair of the Operational Group is Simon Graham, Headteacher of St Edmunds Catholic School, who is very focussed and would not allow the Group to become just a 'talking shop'. The Teaching School Alliance will also challenge partners and ensure that the Group is focussed and pragmatic.

Councillor Purvis said that the principle of the partnership was good, although he was surprised that the Strategic Board has no governor representation or Teacher Liaison Panel representation. He also felt that to ensure accountability of the Board, it would be sensible to have meetings in public as the setting of strategy does not need to be done in private. Alison Jeffery said she would take these points back to the partnership for consideration, but highlighted the fact that this is not a LA led partnership or a formal committee for the council. In response to Cllr Purvis' point about holding meetings in public, Mike Stoneman said that he could see no reason why the minutes of the Strategic Board meetings should not be publicly available on the council's website. This will also apply to minutes of the Operational Group.

Helen Reeder, the Teacher's Liaison Panel representative said that the TLP has a wealth of knowledge of all schools in the city so they would welcome being as involved in the partnership as possible.

Councillor Young said that the LA needed to be realistic about where it will be in two years and realistic about where the LA's role will stop. The partnership is about leaving a legacy for schools to move forward.

### **School improvement**

Mike Stoneman explained that from September 2017 the government intends to remove the current school improvement responsibilities from local authorities. It has also announced the cessation of the Education Services Grant from April 2017 and after this it will be a school led system. For 2016/17 the Council will be commissioning the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance to deliver the LA's statutory school improvement responsibilities in terms of promoting high standards and providing challenge and support to schools. This will be done in an open arena with the Operational Group reporting to the Board. This will be quite a shift but will meet the new landscape. If all goes well with this arrangement the council is likely to extend the contract for another year into 2017/18 subject to available funds.

In response to a question from Councillor Denny regarding staffing implications of these changes, Mike advised that there would not be any. There was previously a team of three school improvement advisors who have all recently left. The Council did try to recruit to fill these vacancies however

there was a lack of applications reflecting the changing educational landscape and duties of the LA in terms of school improvement. A new approach was needed.

### **Academisation**

Mike explained that the council is in support of academisation through the Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) model and believes this provides the best possible chance of delivering the step change in pupils outcomes that are needed. The council is working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to oversee a smooth transition towards academisation. Principles have been agreed with the RSC (1) that small infant and junior (or primary) schools on the same site are expected to be part of the same MAT, (2) that the LA would like MAT to have a mix of infant, junior and secondary schools and (3) that strong MATs should be supported that have the capacity for growth and a good track record.

The LA has clarified the current position with all schools. All schools are considering options although there remain a few that are opposed to this direction of travel.

Currently there are 62 schools within Portsmouth City, 21 schools are academies operated by 11 academy trusts. There are two academy orders ongoing: Redwood Park which is due to become an academy in December 2016, and Arundel Court Primary which is due to move to academy status in April 2017.

Alison Jeffery added that the RSC now has powers of intervention for both academies and LA maintained schools including the issuing of warning notices and establishment of IEBs. From September 2017 school improvement will shift from LAs to system leaders (MATs, Teaching Schools and the RSC). The former Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, had previously said there would be no U-turn on the cessation of the Education Services Grant. However, the current position is unclear as we await the operational guidance and details of the Education for All Bill.

Councillor Denny said that she was aware of discussions taking place nationally regarding LAs establishing their own Academy Trusts for their schools and asked if this was something PCC was considering. Alison Jeffery said that she is attending a National Conference on 11<sup>th</sup> October on this topic where she hoped to learn more about this. Her personal view was that if the LAs are going to deliver a serious challenge role it would be better if the Council did not become an academy provider. It would also be difficult as the Council does not have the staffing resources available. Helen Reeder advised that there are a large number of schools who do not want to be part of a MAT and would welcome the LA becoming a trust. She added that the fact that some academies have not done exceptionally well in Portsmouth has put some schools off. Alison said that the LA were exploring different options but both Charter Academy and The Portsmouth Academy for example have both done very well since moving to an academy. Councillor Horton said that schools needed a guidance on whether this is a viable option or not. Alison Jeffery said that currently it was impossible to give a definitive position until

the operational guidance and details of the Education for All Bill are made available. An update on this matter would be provided at the next meeting.

### **Provisional outcomes for 15/16**

Mike explained that a new assessment framework was introduced from 2015/16 introducing scaled scores and expected standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Therefore the results for KS1 and KS2 cannot be directly compared with previous years.

For early years and the good level of development (GLD) measure, Portsmouth remains above national but the gap has narrowed.

KS1 combined reading, writing and maths measures had previously been above national, but for 15/16 it was slightly below. Mike advised the Board to treat these figures with a high degree of caution due to the changes to the assessment frameworks as indicated previously.

KS2 combined reading, writing and maths at the expected standard was at 47% for 15/16 against the national figure of 53%.

KS4 has seen significant progress from 2015. The percentage of pupils achieving both English and Maths GCSE grades A\*-C has risen from 52.6% to 57.5% which is a massive jump. Portsmouth Academy, Priory, Miltoncross and King Richard Schools all had a significant increase in their GCSE results. These results were very pleasing.

Councillor Horton asked whether moderation took place to ensure parity. Mike confirmed that LAs have a statutory duty to undertake moderation for both KS1 (all subjects) and KS2 (only writing) teacher assessment. Mike Stoneman advised that the DfE have looked at how LAs are moderating exams and how tough or soft they have been for 2015/16. Portsmouth appear to be somewhere in the middle. It was anticipated that it will take a few years for this to bed in.

Alison Jeffery added that discussion with primary headteachers would take place to share advice. Councillor Young said that although he was concerned with the KS2 attainment results he was also pragmatic as it is a new framework and felt it needed to have a year to embed this before can move forward. The council would reflect and analyse and also seek information from other areas to look at areas it needs to address.

## **4. Dates of Future Meetings**

Officers advised that the following items would be on the agenda for the next meeting:

- Update on progress of the Portsmouth Education Partnership.
- Outline of the new education strategy, to be identified through the PEP.
- Ofsted inspections - update on which schools have been inspected and the results of these inspections.

Officers advised that the next meeting would be held in late January/early February. After a brief discussion it was agreed to move the meeting time to 4pm and the Local Democracy Officer would look for a suitable date in consultation with the Chair, which would be circulated to the members of the Group in due course.

**Post meeting note** - the next meeting would take place on Thursday 2 February at 4pm in Conference Room A, Second Floor, Civic Offices.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 pm.

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Councillor Neill Young  
Chair