

## **EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 3 November 2017 at 4.00 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Neill Young (in the Chair)  
David Tompkins  
Ben Dowling  
Suzy Horton  
Will Purvis

### **Officers**

Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education  
Julia Katherine, Head of Inclusion  
Neil Stevenson, Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions & Reintegration Service Manager.

#### **6. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Godier and Helen Reeder, TLP representative. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Horton.

#### **7. Declarations of interest (AI 2)**

Councillor Dowling declared a personal interest as his company Unloc Learning Limited is responsible for facilitating the Council of Portsmouth Students on behalf of multiple Portsmouth schools.

#### **8. Minutes of the previous meeting - 11 July 2017 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 11 July 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

#### **9. New topic for review - School Attendance and part time timetables (AI 4)**

The Director of Children, Families and Education explained that the council has a broad strategy for increasing school attendance and a very clear protocol in place covering decisions to place children or young people on a reduced timetable. She said she had written to all schools at the beginning of term to confirm this protocol, reminding them that children should not be on part time timetables for longer than 6 weeks. The objective of the review would be for the panel to look at how the council and schools, and other partners can work together to minimise the use of part time timetables and

whether the policy is working. It will also look at good practice across the city. After a brief discussion it was agreed to amend this objective to: *'To explore the appropriate use of part time timetables, how children on part time timetables are supported to resume full time attendance as early as possible and consider how to minimise the use of part time timetables'*.

In response to a question from Councillor Tompkins about the evidence around the effectiveness or otherwise of home schooling, the Director of Children, Families and Education said that the local authority does not have the right to enter home to check on children who are home schooled. It might be possible to use the pupil level data held by the DFE to analyse success in terms of GCSE results. Members of the panel pointed out, however, that parents of home schooled children would not necessarily agree that success should be judged in these terms. It was agreed that the object of exploring the reasons parents chose to home educate should be simply to ensure that they were not choosing this option because they felt pressured or constrained, rather than to reach a view on the merits of home education as such. The panel were surprised about how little monitoring takes place for home schooled pupils.

#### Evidence gathering

Councillor Young said that he felt it would be good to get a different perspective and go out into schools to talk to head teachers and inclusion leads about attendance. Panel members agreed with this approach; officers were asked to suggest to the panel which schools would be best to visit.

Councillor Purvis said it would be good to find a mechanism to encourage evidence contributions from children currently on part time timetables. The Director of Children, Families and Education suggested that it would be possible to seek views from young people through services working with them, such as early help or social workers, or keyworkers at their school. With regard to comments from parents, the panel felt that parents may be reluctant to attend a focus group. The Director of Children, Families and Education said that she could put a call out to parents, for example through the Parent and Carer Board, to seek views on school attendance issues. With regard to the initial evidence gathering session, it was agreed that the panel should be divided up to visit early years setting, primary schools and secondary schools. Their chair asked members which phase they would be most interested in visiting.

The panel agreed the following councillors would visit the below school settings:

#### Early Years setting

Councillor David Tompkins

Councillor Paul Godier

#### Primary schools

Councillor Suzy Horton

Councillor Ben Dowling

Secondary schools  
Councillor Neill Young  
Councillor Will Purvis

As Councillor Godier had given his apologies for this meeting, he would be notified outside of the meeting that he had been asked to attend visits to early year's settings.

The Director of Children, Families and Education said it would be sensible for panel members to visit two schools each. The meetings would be with the headteacher and inclusion leads at the school. Rob Sanders, Deputy Director of Education for the Anglican diocese said he could liaise with any church schools that the panel wanted to visit.

It was agreed that ideally these visits would take place before the end of the winter term. Prior to this the Director of Children Families and Education, along with her officers would send a letter to the chosen schools prior to the visits to explain the purpose of the visit. She would also draft a set of questions for members to ask at each of the visits. The visits would essentially be for the panel to establish what the council can do to support schools on school attendance and part time timetables and to understand the challenges they are facing. These would be circulated for agreement by the panel before the visits take place. Where good practice is found this can be shared more widely with schools.

Neil Stevenson, Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions & Reintegration Service Manager added that it would be possible to seek further input from schools through the regular meetings between the Education Department and school inclusion leads..

Next meeting

The Chair felt it would be helpful for the next meeting in January to receive a presentation from the relevant officers on each of the objectives. Also at the January meeting the feedback from the school visits can be shared and discussion take place regarding obtaining further evidence from a focus group.

**RESOLVED that the scoping document be agreed subject to the amendment to the second objective:  
'To explore the appropriate use of part time timetables, how children on part time timetables are supported to resume full time attendance as early as possible and consider how to minimise the use of part time timetables'.**

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

Councillor Neill Young  
Chair