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EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the virtual meeting of the Education Advisory Board held on Monday, 1 November 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Terry Norton
Jeanette Smith
Judith Smyth

13. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Critchley, Head of Sufficiency and Resources, as she had another commitment. The Chair welcomed Sally Hodges, the new Interim Director of Children, Families & Education.

14. Declarations of interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is Vice-Chair of the governing body at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through an external agency. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she works for Hampshire branch of Unison and is a governor of the City of Portsmouth College.

Mike Stoneman declared an interest as he is a governor of the City of Portsmouth College. Debbie Anderson declared an interest as she sometimes works as an Ofsted inspector. Frances Soul declared an interest as she is a director of two educational charities - Coram Life Education and Future Frontiers.

15. Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 July 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

16. Support and challenge for Local Authority maintained schools

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years, introduced the report, which builds on previous ones and incorporates requests for more data as shown in the appendices, and highlighted the main points.

One of the two schools which was less than Good for Overall Effectiveness, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary, is now part of the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust, and at the time of conversion was moving in the right direction. The other school, Milton Park Primary, is due to convert to an

academy on 1 December 2021; termly HMI visits have reported that it is improving.

Ms Anderson has made a second bid for funding for a second year of participation in the Hackney Learning Trust's Destination Reader programme. The approach is flexible so schools can roll it out to a particular class or a year group. Visits to participating schools show it is successful. Eight further schools are taking on the programme, two are trialling Destination Reader Plus at Year 7 and one is adopting a programme tailored for KS1.

Not all schools who were eligible for funding had accessed it but some has been secured to purchase resources to improve achievement in Phonics, up to and including KS4, in view of its importance as all teachers are teachers of reading. Schools have been made aware of the Systematic Synthetic Phonics programmes that will be validated by the DfE in March 2022. If schools adopt other phonics programmes they need to ensure the resources match robustly the phonics children are being taught.

Although EYFS moderation is no longer mandatory it is still offered. Education continues to support with recruitment, for example, Ms Anderson was on the panel to recruit a headteacher for Cottage Grove Primary even though it is converting to an academy on 1 December.

The HISP (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth) Teaching School Hub has replaced the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance. Early Career Teachers (ECTs) have replaced Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and have a two-year development programme to which most schools have signed up.

About three peer reviews are planned before Christmas and others in the spring and summer. A group comprising three schools (one LA maintained, one from the ARK MAT, one from the University of Chichester MAT) will trial training programmes before they are disseminated across the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP). There is already a training video and now face-to-face training is being developed ready for trialling.

Pompey Literacy Pirates is expanding with a second hub planned from January 2022 and another 100 children will be offered places.

Ms Anderson is preparing training modules on the inspection process for forthcoming Ofsted inspections which are underway again.

Mike Stoneman added that much of this work is city-wide and many academies are involved as well as LA maintained schools. Education's Senior Leadership Team have recently agreed to carry out informal visits to maintained schools each term to keep in touch, check they are managing and see if they need any support.

In response to questions from members, officers explained

The only other school in the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust is Oaklands Catholic School in Waterlooville. There is not a lot of intelligence yet but early indications show that matters are improving. Oaklands have Leadership judged as Outstanding. The National Leader of Education work Corpus Christi received was from an Outstanding Catholic primary. There may be a different demographic in the Oaklands area but officers will work closely with the Trust, and the annual meeting with all the MATs is this term. Corpus Christi is part of the PEP and is using Destination Reader so the LA (Local Authority) is still keeping in touch with projects. Quite a high number of pupils from Catholic primaries in Portsmouth go to Oaklands.

The situation with waiting lists for CAMHS is similar both nationally and locally. A draft pathway to clarify the help available is out for consultation. People think they may need CAMHS support but other professionally backed support is available such as Kooth. Officers agreed staff recruitment is still a challenge but are addressing it as a priority.

As to whether face-to-face assemblies have resumed it very much depends on individual schools. Initially they returned as schools value assemblies but it depends on the level of Covid cases. Some schools hold hybrid assemblies with some children attending in person and others remotely though technical problems may mean children sometimes miss out.

With regard to measuring outcomes, evaluating success or noticing early indication of problems, there are currently no national standardised tests and benchmarking measures. Instead, schools will concentrate on the best quality teaching, learning and catch-up programmes, for example, phonics and Destination Reader which is based on good quality pedagogy. It will not be long before there are tests and measures again. However, at the moment schools have nothing to compare themselves with. PiXL is an organisation which puts schools in a family group so they can benchmark themselves against other schools. If not, officers have to track schools individually and they have been told they cannot use data for accountability. Sarah Hilditch, Lead Moderator, has already started training teachers new to Years 2 and 6 and appointing moderators.

Schools are funded for release time for mentoring and supporting Early Career Teachers.

By and large relationships with MATs are good (there are currently 13 and soon to be 14 when the University of Portsmouth takes on two schools). The policy is not to push schools into becoming academies and the remaining ones want to be LA maintained. The choice is only removed if a school is judged Inadequate or goes into special measures and is forced to become an academy. Frances Soul said the PEP meets MAT leaders and this half-term the focus is to ensure it has spoken to all of them so they feel they can contribute; ARK have already responded.

The Teach Portsmouth website and campaign has given teaching careers a high profile and is encouraging people, including teaching assistants, to consider teaching. Teachers are very tired because of Covid and there is

concern there are fewer applicants for school leadership posts than previously. Schools have also had increasing difficulties recruiting teaching assistants as they are competing with organisations that offer more attractive wages and flexible hours such as supermarkets. The Mary Rose Academy in particular is struggling so officers are doing additional work to address issues in this sector.

The Chair noted that although the Education Advisory Board is primarily concerned with LA maintained schools, there are close relationships with the MATs and the LA invests beyond just its own schools, which is shown when people talk holistically about Portsmouth schools. However, the Board should be mindful of schools' autonomy when they become academies.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the report.

17. Ongoing response to Covid-19

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education, presented the report, highlighting sections 9 and 10 which cover the summer and autumn terms respectively. EdenRed provided food vouchers as they have done previously. Over 3,000 children participated in HAF Fun events. Covid infection rates are now decreasing after a rise at the start of the autumn term. The pressure caused by staff absence is a particular concern; one school had to close for a couple of days and return to remote learning. At the start of term the Director of Public Health had written to schools to say if there is clear evidence of outbreaks then they can bring back measures such as masks in communal areas. Some LAs have taken more radical measures whereas Portsmouth gives more autonomy. The only schools yet to participate in the vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds are the Harbour School and Mayville but they are due to do so within the next week or so. Support from NHS Solent has been superb, headteachers have given good feedback and take-up is just under 50%. Take-up figures are expected to rise as parents can now book at vaccination clinics such as the one at St James' Hospital.

In response to questions, officers said that

There are no figures as to how many school staff (teaching and non-teaching) have been vaccinated though Alison Critchley could check. Officers can check if it is the case that vaccination is going to be mandatory for school staff.

Officers will produce a few more Covid update reports like the current one but then they are likely to stop.

With regard to remote learning schools are in a much better situation than they were and have an improved offer; in some cases pupils at home can join an actual lesson remotely. Officers are looking to build on the successes of the last 18 months.

Officers have kept track of devices that were given to children via the local authority. They have no knowledge of those given directly to schools but understand that they are still being used. Most are not struggling to provide

devices now. Some secondary schools have arranged for all children to have a device for which parents have to pay unless they are subsidised under the pupil premium.

Members commented that it would be a pity to lose any gains made during Covid, for example, pupils could use their devices to recap what they did at school. Remote learning has become "business as usual"; at first it was essential but is now essential either at school or at home. Remote processes such as parents' evenings have the advantage of no parking problems so will probably continue.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken over the past twenty 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.

18. Strategy to reduce fixed-term exclusions and improve school attendance

Mike Stoneman introduced the report, noting that officers had worked on the strategy for the last few months and it had gone to the PEP Strategic Board a few weeks ago. It represents a collective effort to reduce learning loss in addition to that caused by Covid. Although 2020 figures show a significant improvement they need to be viewed with extreme caution because of Covid. More reliable evidence will be seen this year. Mr Stoneman highlighted the success of the relational practice used at Trafalgar School (part of Salterns Academy Trust). They have very few exclusions and have done much work on their in-house alternative provision which enables children to return to mainstream classes as quickly as possible. The approach has had fantastic success in Hull and Leeds. Mr Stoneman outlined the support schools will receive to help them implement the approach.

In response to suggestions that a presentation on the differences between restorative and relational practice would be helpful, officers explained the former concentrates more on the individual child and their family whereas the latter concentrates more on a whole school approach involving all pupils. Relational practice incorporates both approaches and also others such as trauma-informed approaches. The relational approach is about the way of being, classroom management and leadership style. It is not an intervention that is done "to" families but "with" them so hopefully they feel they have been heard so when there is a need to challenge there is some goodwill. Officers agreed a short information session on the different practices would be helpful.

There is some funding already but it is proposed that the Schools Forum asks for more funding from the Designated Schools Grant carry forward reserves to fund the approach.

The permanent exclusion (now known as expulsion) rate in Portsmouth is one of the lowest in the UK as a result of protocols established when it had one of the highest rates. However, the rate of fixed-term exclusions (FTE, now known as suspensions) is relatively high. One FTE may be effective but multiple ones are no help at all. The relational approach done well helps

teachers feel supported in the classroom. Schools have to buy in to the approach but it will not be forced on them. However, officers will strongly challenge schools with high FTE rates.

Figures for chronic absence (less than 50%) include absence due to disability or health conditions including long Covid. Children with chronic absence should have a Family Support Plan and a Lead Professional. Officers can bring an update on figures on how many children have Lead Professionals to the next meeting as the current figure is low. They are carefully monitoring chronic absence figures. The Chair had met officers that day about how it is important for families with children who have long Covid to feel understood and supported. The Long Covid Working Group has made progress with the CCG in providing support for children with long Covid.

Officers acknowledged The Harbour School has a waiting list in KS3 but said it will improve when the provision at Wymering is in place. The Inclusion Outreach Service (IOS) and the Portsmouth Inclusion Education Quality Mark can support children on the waiting list. Officers would support schools who are struggling to avoid exclusions and work with the IOS. If a child is on a dual registered place which their school is paying for officers would help support them. The Harbour School has space but it is a question of managing it so places can be released for other children. Schools can share best practice with each other about alternative provision. Members noted The Harbour School was very successful in equipping children to return to mainstream education. Officers confirmed the Fair Access Protocol is used to allocate places to The Harbour School; officers manage the process but schools effectively make decisions through the Inclusion Support Panels (ISP).

Trafalgar School funded their work on exclusions from their own budget though officers are giving all schools some funding so they can adopt relational practice. They will have training and support from the Salterns Academy Trust and Mark Finnis (L30). Ofsted expects schools to embed the approach.

The Chair said it was exciting to pull together the different strands of discussion on exclusion and restorative and relational practice. The best way for children to learn is to be in school so it is essential to look at how schools and families are supported so they can support children. It is the behaviour that is not wanted, not the child. The step change at Trafalgar is already apparent.

Members thanked all school staff, including governors and non-teaching staff, for their work during a difficult time.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the following:

Board Members are recommended to comment on and endorse the draft city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions. A final version of the strategy and an update on the implementation of the action plan will be brought to the next Board meeting in February 2022.

The next meeting is on Thursday 10 February at 4 pm (location to be confirmed).

The meeting concluded at 5.22 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair

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