

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Monday, 24 November 2014 at 7.00 pm in Ground Floor Meeting Room 5, Civic Offices.

Present

Councillor Will Purvis (in the Chair)
Ben Dowling
Ken Ferrett
Lynn Stagg

Education Representative

Helen Reeder, Portsmouth National Union of Teachers

34. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

No apologies for absence had been received.

35. Declarations of Interest (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Minutes of the Meeting of 20 October 2014 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 20 October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

37. Scrutiny of Children's Services (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Julian Wooster, Director of Children's and Adult's Services presented his report. He reminded the panel that the report had been requested at a previous ECYP Scrutiny Panel meeting following the recent Ofsted report. Ofsted had searched the public reports on the Council's website and raised concern that there were insufficient public reports on the scrutiny of children's services. Mr Wooster advised that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education receives weekly briefings with him and as part of these he is briefed on any cases of concern. Elected members are also well represented on the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children's Trust Board. He summarised the section of the action plan attached to the report which had been submitted to Ofsted.

Members commented that they need to know what questions to ask in order to be able to challenge and scrutinise effectively and also need to be clear on what information they are entitled to have in order to carry out this role. Mr

Wooster confirmed it was appropriate for members to challenge him on performance of the service.

Cllr Purvis said he was pleased with the action plan however was conscious that there was a risk with circulating the reports/minutes of the suggested meetings would not always be read. He asked whether in addition to this 15 minutes of each ECYP meeting could be dedicated to one of the issues with a relevant officer present to answer questions from members. The panel could then decide whether more detailed scrutiny of the issue is required. The panel agreed this would be useful and Mr Wooster agreed to make arrangements for this.

With regard to training, Cllr Purvis said he was pleased that there had been some recent sessions for members around looked after children and safeguarding, however he was keen for the panel to receive further training in order for the members to gain an in depth understanding of the area. He suggested that following each municipal year a development plan for members is created so they can raise any areas where they would like more training. Mr Wooster advised that the Chief Executive was currently in discussions with the LGA regarding the potential for them to provide free training for members on children's services. The panel agreed they would welcome this training and would also be keen to receive more internal training. The panel agreed they would welcome an update from the Chief Executive on progress with the LGA training. Mr Wooster said he would follow this up and inform the panel.

RESOLVED

(1) That the proposed way forward outlined by the Director of Children's and Adult's Services for the scrutiny of children's services be approved. In addition an item be included on every ECYP agenda for any issues in Children's and Adult's services to be reported and discussed with a relevant officer.

(2) That Mr Wooster will ask the Chief Executive about progress with the LGA training for members and would review with the City Solicitor further training sessions for the panel.

38. Review into Pupil Premium (AI 5)

The chair welcomed all guests to the meeting and introductions were made around the table before evidence was given.

(a) Loreley Lawrence, Governor Highbury Primary and Nursery

Ms Lawrence advised that that her school has closed the gap in reading and writing by 2.4%. In their action research project on maths 100% of their PP children made expected progress and of those, 30% made more than expected progress. The school has two ladies at school who help the PP children and their parents. Interventions include providing a mini bus to help children get to and from school, advising parents with money

matters, debt advice, food bank information, and involving the parents by asking them to help the PP children with their reading. She advised that there was a HMI report on their school website and that she found RAISE on line helpful. The governors will be discussing PP at the teaching and learning meeting on 1st December. Ms Lawrence said she felt more time should be spent on PP training, and that governors must be prepared to dedicate more time to monitor PP spend.

(b) Emma Kelsall, Governor Services Officer

Mrs Kelsall advised that governor services were very involved in assisting governors with PP. The team offers a service where individual queries are answered such as how to effectively challenge their head teacher on PP use, or on how much information should be reported on their website on an individual basis. The team offers full governing body training where the school can choose the topics covered and often PP is included as part of these sessions. The team assists governors on how they can effectively challenge school leaders. In June this year a general finance training session was held for governors which had a specific section on PP. The recent PP conference on 17 November was also open to governors to attend and positive feedback had been received from those who had attended this. There had been a conference for governors to include a specific training session for governors on PP scheduled for October. This however has been postponed until late spring as was felt that October was a busy time of year for governors due being just after the beginning of the new term.

The governor services team keep abreast with the information released by the DfE and national governors association such as toolkits and will pass this information on to governors. The team also works closely with the education officers. Mrs Kelsall said that eventually she would like to see the team offer specific PP training rather than having this included in another session. She also thought that offering sessions for both the head teacher and chair of governors to attend would be useful and was looking to offer this in the future.

Mrs Kelsall said that the gap was narrowing well with primary schools however there was still work to be done with secondary schools. Many secondary schools have become academies and some do not buy in to the governor services SLA. As a result of this the governor services team now has limited contact with the governing bodies of these schools.

(c) Patrick Hill, Vice Chair of Governors, Chair of Finance, Redwood Park School

Mr Hill gave a brief history of the situation at Redwood Park and explained that inherited difficulties had meant that PP had been further down the agenda for detailed focus for a period of time. PP it is being managed very well and documents provided the evidence for this. Redwood Park received £75,600 PP in 2013-14 and the majority of money is spent on improving literacy. James Copeland the Interventions Leader at the school

was the lead for PP and he is very enthusiastic and makes sure that the PP grant is spent and accurately tracked where the money is going. The school has found that those pupils receiving dedicated support from the PP funded activities were outperforming other pupils who were not in receipt of the funding.

(d) Claire Tomlinson, Vice Chair of Governors at Corpus Christi School

Ms Tomlinson explained that in Corpus Christi there are 59 pupils eligible for PP and the amount received for 2014-15 was £73,800. The school has found that boosting teaching in small groups and targeted interventions by experienced teachers have been the most effective use of their PP. The quality of teaching is vital to improve educational attainment. The school has part time teachers covering a class so that the senior teacher can be released to focus on smaller groups of pupils who need extra support. They also have a writing specialist to work with targeted pupils to deliver 1:1 support and work with a small group of pupils to accelerate progress and narrow the gap in attainment. The governing body monitors the progress of PP pupils through both the finance committee and the curriculum committee. The head teacher presents the data to governors in various forms and the governors review this and drill down into cases where pupils are not making the expected amount of progress. With KS1 the gap was narrowing but with KS2 more work needed to be done. It was also interesting to note that EAL pupils also made more progress than other pupils.

Questions and discussion

- Councillor Purvis commented that Redwood Park School had adopted a targeted approach with 80% of their pupils benefitting from the PP funding. Mr Hill replied that the vast majority of funding had been spent on extra time and quality teaching, which was a slight contrast to the schools who attended the previous meeting. Both Highbury Primary and Corpus Christi schools have a relatively low amount of PP pupils so it is sensible for them to have a less targeted approach.
- Councillor Stagg said that at the 17th November PP conference she attended, it was highlighted that schools who have very few registered free school meal (FSM) pupils PP is focussed on those pupils and they do well, schools with a large number of PP pupils also do well at narrowing the gap, but it is the schools in the middle who are struggling most to narrow the gap. Advice was given at the conference that having outstanding teaching was the most important method for improving PP rather than employing additional teaching assistants.
- Councillor Purvis asked the governors if their school monitored their performance on narrowing the gap against other schools both locally and nationally. Ms Tomlinson said that Corpus Christi do look nationally following advice from Ofsted to do this. Mr Hill said that Redwood Park School monitor their school against two other

special schools one locally in Emsworth and one nationally in Bath. Mrs Kelsall said that governor services encourage governors to use the data dashboard to compare nationally and also against other schools in the city.

- In response to a question about value for money for interventions, Ms Tomlinson said that last year the school had hired several part time teachers so a lot more interventions were in place. The education officers assisted the governors in monitoring this to see the impact of these. Mr Hill said that in his school, one to one tuition is the intervention achieving the most value for money. This was particularly important as Redwood Park is a special school as this keeps the pupils on topic and allows for more focussed learning.
- Councillor Stagg had provided some notes from the PP conference which had been circulated to the panel. She said the HMI session had highlighted some excellent ideas and that Ofsted inspectors want to know the impact that PP is having and schools should have a dedicated person in charge of monitoring its spend and impact. Ms Tomlinson advised that she also worked in a secondary school in Hampshire and in this school the books of PP students are marked first to ensure that they are given the necessary attention. Seating plans of the classroom are produced so that the teacher knows who the PP pupils are so that they receive more attention. Ms Reeder advised that this took place in her school and advised that the pupils would not know who the PP pupils are. Teachers are asked what they are doing for each pupil and are asked to prove their accountability.
- With regard to how PP practice is shared in the city, Mrs Kelsall advised that the HMI at the recent conference had suggested establishing a PP coordinators network for the city. Governor services were also considering ways of sharing information that would not take up too much time for governors, bearing in mind they are volunteers. She felt that social media is not currently being utilised enough in this area and this was something that governor services are looking to improve. One of the clerks had set up a Facebook group for all clerks in the city to share ideas and best practice without having to take time to meet in person. This had been very well received and it was proposed to eventually roll this out for chairs of governors as well. Councillor Purvis felt this was an excellent idea and suggested that the private sector could provide some advice on how best to do this.
- Councillor Purvis said he attended the afternoon session of the conference and said he observed several discussions between school representatives on PP which was a great networking opportunity to share best practice. Mrs Kelsall said that the training sessions are always tailored so that there are networking sections in them as it is recognised that this is a useful way to share best

practice and ideas.

- In response to a question about the amount of time involved for governors on PP, Ms Tomlinson and Ms Lawrence said that governors must be prepared to dedicate time to monitoring PP spend and that they were both happy with that.
- In response to a question about how far up the agenda PP was in schools and whether for example was this a regular governing board item, Ms Lawrence said it was an item on their teaching and learning meeting on 1 December however in the future separate meetings just on PP may be required. Mr Hill said that his school they had brought in a regime of agenda planning and PP is likely to be scrutinised every term. Their two sub committees been given a level of autonomy and they pass and agree motions which are sent to the full governing body to be ratified. Ms Tomlinson said that it was a standing item on their finance and curriculum committees.
- In answer to a question about whether PP was part of the schools improvement plan, the governors present were uncertain. Mrs Kelsall suggested that she could contact chairs of governors to find out whether there is a standing item on the FGB agenda for PP and also whether there is a specific governor for PP. The Panel felt this would be useful information and asked Mrs Kelsall to proceed with this. Mrs Reeder added that there was a danger that if PP is not spent correctly the government may decide not to continue to provide PP funding in the future.
- Councillor Purvis said about the opportunity to look at the comparative impact in other schools. Currently the LA is not measuring this and those present felt this would be useful.
- Councillor Purvis said that interventions can sometimes be less obvious when individual cases are drilled down into. He shared with the panel the washing machine analogy which was told at the PP conference. He explained that a school had a number of pupils absent on a particular day of the week. When this was looked into it was found this coincided with having PE this day and pupils did not want to attend as they had no PE kit and if they attended they would be forced to wear the schools PE kits which were often dirty. The school responded by purchasing a washing machine to make sure the spare kits are always clean which made attendance levels increase on this day of the week. Another intervention mentioned was buying pupils alarm clocks to ensure that children wake up in good time for school and this has found to have made a big difference. Ms Reeder said that it was difficult to record the progress of non-direct interventions such as this although they can have a significant impact.
- Councillor Dowling said that PP funding is a huge amount of money however it was not until the last year that this was taken at a

serious level. It is a flagship government policy and therefore important that all governors understand PP and it is at the top of their agenda.

- In response to a question about what the governors would like to see the council do to help governors with PP, Ms Lawrence said the PP conference was useful and further training and networking opportunities would be welcomed. Mrs Kelsall said that this could be done for those schools that buy in to the governor services SLA. She felt that running sessions for both the chair of governor and head teacher and any other lead members of staff to attend would also add value and allow for a more joined up approach. Ms Tomlinson said that the governors at her school always rely on the Head teacher to make sure they are interpreting data correctly so it is difficult to challenge the head teacher sometimes. More outside support such as the recent conference would be welcomed.
- It was noted that it was unrealistic to say that governors should know and understand everything possible so long as governors know where to find information they don't know. The panel felt that PP was such a big topic however and that governors should endeavour to get to grips with this area of their school.
- There was some concern that with schools moving to academies that the LA has lost contact with a number of school governing bodies. Councillor Purvis asked whether there was merit on having some training sessions to sell to academies that don't buy into the SLA. Mrs Kelsall said that lots of academies do still buy in to the SLA. Following the departure of the Senior Governor Support Officer earlier this year the whole governor services team is being reviewed and they were considering whether to commission the training or keep this in-house. More could be done to help support academies including pay as you use training sessions for them although it was noted that it was likely that the academy sponsors had their own training sessions they offered.

The panel thanked the governors for attending.

39. Dates of Future Meetings and Way Forward for Review (AI 6)

The Panel felt they had received good evidence over the last few meetings and were keen to move forward and start drafting their report. It was agreed to hold an informal meeting on 10th December to start discussing recommendations and to see whether further evidence gathering was required. It was agreed that the panel's final report would be circulated to all governors and head teachers.

The meeting concluded at 8.45 pm.

Councillor Will Purvis
Chair