

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 12th March, 2014.

Present: Councillors Sohal (Chair), Abe (Vice-Chair), Brooker, Carter, Davis, O'Connor, Hussain, Malik and Matloob

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members: Lynda Bussley (Primary School Teacher Co-optee) – from 6.45 p.m.

PART 1

45. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Brooker declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 3 (Members Questions) as the question submitted concerned Burnham Park Academy which his daughter attended.

46. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 January 2014

The minutes of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel meeting on the 30 January 2014 were approved as a correct record.

47. Member Questions

Councillor Brooker submitted the following question:

“Given that in 2012 373 Slough children attended Burnham Upper in 2012, it is of great concern that in 2013 no one low achieving pupil in Burnham Park Academy got 5 GCSEs. In the latest OFSTED report the school was judged to be in need of improvement in nearly all aspects. It is of great concern that this report states that pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium are not making as much progress as they should. Is it possible to find out what is being done to improve this sorry state of affairs?”

Julian King-Harris, Head of School Improvement at Cambridge Education, responded to the submitted question, with the Panel considering the following points:

- Burnham Park Academy had 15 children in the low achieving category, a small number compared with other schools such as Beechwood with 28 or Wexham with 48. In comparing the achievement rates across this cohort with other schools, Burnham Park Academy, in percentage terms, is in proportion with the general levels of achievement.
- Schools are required to publish how much they receive in Pupil Premiums and what this funding is used for and the impact it has had. OFSTED had been focusing on this aspect of school spending, which gave the council an opportunity to encourage greater targeting of this resource where the impact would be more focused on the students in question.

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- Pupil Premium students were not the same as low achievement students, although some may fall into both categories. The Pupil Premium related to children eligible for Free School Meals. Across Slough 25% of Pupil Premium students achieved five GCSEs A*-C.
- Whilst Slough Borough Council did not have jurisdiction, it was able to approach the Academy about its use of the Pupil Premium and the work being done to improve attainment amongst its low achievement cohort, but cannot compel the school to respond.

Resolved – to note the response.

48. Churchmead School - Update on Improvement

Chris Tomes (Headteacher, Churchmead School) and Simon Evry (Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead) summarised the key elements of the improvements made at Churchmead School since OFSTED found it to be inadequate in November 2012.

The Panel noted the following comments:

- That rapid and sustained progress had been made, and recognised by OFSTED who moved the school out of special measures, with a rating of 'requires improvement', in December 2013.
- That the GCSE results in the summer 2013 had shown improvement on previous years.
- That the school aspired to be outstanding.

The Panel discussed the following points:

- that there had not been a large turnover of staff at the school, and that therefore the improvements in the quality of teaching had been done with existing staff through a change in culture;
- that the new Headteacher had had a profound impact demonstrated by the rapid improvement at the school, bringing a strategic focus to improvement, teaching and learning; creating a calm, focused and dynamic environment;
- that the school had opened new science labs in the summer 2013, and had just received confirmation of a grant to further improve facilities at the site;
- that consideration of moving to academy status, which had been on hold, would now be explored as part of the ambitious plans for the school going forward. Such a move would provide an opportunity to draw a line under the historical reputation of the school, rebranding it for the future. The Panel particularly discussed the impact of such a move on admissions policies and the importance of Churchmead to Slough's ability to provide sufficient numbers of school places;
- that the school had set a target of 50% A*-C for this year's GCSE cohort, and a range of interventions were in place to support achievement of this. In particular, the recent disruption at the school due to the flooding, had been minimised by working with East Berkshire College, who had provided facilities for Year 11. In addition

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to this, the schools had looked to identify students at risk of under-achieving, putting in place strategies to improve their standards through specialised, focused revision;

- that the school was working to mobilise parents, and the Parent Forum had been successful in engaging them in the vision for the school with the aim of regaining the confidence of the local community;
- that the school recognised the historical problems with achievement in science, but that results were improving. Science, along with maths and engineering, were a key focus; and the school would be interested in developing a stronger relationship with local businesses, such as those based on the Trading Estate;
- that the school would also be focusing on improving reading age issues, with a particular emphasis on students engaging in active reading;
- that the attendance record at the school had just tipped up over the threshold that OFSTED would consider to be a 'good' rating; and
- that consideration was being given to establishing a shadow Board of Governors, but that the Interim Executive Board had been doing a very good job, with a small focused, dynamic group driving the improvement agenda.

The Panel congratulated Chris Tomes and Simon Evry on the improvements made at Churchmead and thanked them for their time.

Resolved – to continue to monitor progress at Churchmead School, and bring the discussion back to the Panel should the next OFSTED inspection raises any further issues.

49. **Assessment and Examination Results for 2012-13**

Robin Crofts (Lead for Education, Cambridge Education) and Julian King-Harris (Head of School Improvement) introduced the report and stressed the focus of the borough's schools on improvement, particularly in relation to raising the aspirations and achievements of vulnerable groups.

The Panel discussed:

- the need to celebrate the success of Slough's students in 2013, with a rise of 5.3% in attainment at Key Stage 4, bring Slough up to 7th in the country out of 152 local authorities for results;
- that at Key Stage 2, Free School Meal (FSM) students were achieving around the national average, and significantly higher than the national average at Key Stage 4. However, there was still a distance to go in terms of closing to the gap when compared with non-FSM students;
- the need to ensure that the Pupil Premium funding was spent in a focused way to benefit effectively the individual it is attached to, and discourage schools spending it on more broad provision. It was felt this would then drive closing the gap;
- that the council closely monitors the areas of scrutiny from OFSTED, and that looking at the quality of teaching included close review of the accuracy of assessments of need;

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- that individual schools assess what curriculum they enter their students for, which can distort the entry figures for such subjects as GCSE science;
- the need to improve the offer to teachers, and encourage them to come to, and stay in, Slough. The Panel received additional information from Lynda Bussley providing a summary of the key findings from the Department for Education Workload Survey 2013, with working conditions and pay being a serious barrier to staff recruitment and retention nationally. The Panel suggested that there might be cross-service learning from the work stream in Children's Services looking at the recruitment and retention of social workers; as well as work to bring the schools together in a collective recruitment programme to market Slough on a bigger scale; the council should also consider the effectiveness of key worker housing at retaining staff.

Resolved – to congratulate the borough's schools' and students' excellent results in 2013.

50. Community Learning and Skills - Review of 2012/13 Performance and Development

Philip Wright (Head of Community Learning and Skills) introduced the report setting out the progress made in the development of a shared community learning and skills service with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The Panel discussed:

- the importance of partner engagement, and the excellent relationships that had been developed across the two boroughs with providers of this service;
- the need to increase the number of apprentices employed by Slough Borough Council or through its sub-contractors to set the right example to other employers in the borough. The apprenticeships should not just be in business administration but provide broader opportunities for trade skills and other key growing sectors; and
- that the City Deal would provide additional impetus to the ASPIRE programme, with a focus on apprenticeships for NEETs.

RECOMMENDED – that the Cabinet commission a piece of work to investigate the options for increasing the number of apprentices employed by the council and/or its sub-contractors and report back to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on proposals in six months.

51. Forward Work Programme

Resolved – to note the current work programme.

52. Attendance Record

Resolved – to note the attendance record for the current municipal year.

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53. Date of Next Meeting - 10 April 2014

Resolved – that the Panel's final meeting of the municipal year would be held on the 10 April 2014.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.33 pm and closed at 9.00 pm)