

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 11th March, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Abe (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Brooker, Chahal, Davis, M Holledge, Malik, Matloob and Sohal

Education Voting Co-opted Members

Jim Welsh – Catholic Diocese of Northampton

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Jo Rockall – Secondary school teacher representative

Maggie Stacey – Head teacher representative

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bal

PART 1

38. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his position on the shadow governing board of Churchmead School and his daughter's attendance at Burnham Park Academy.

39. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th January 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2015 were approved as a correct record.

40. Member Questions

Written questions from members and responses from officers were circulated. On the one outstanding question (health and safety at Beechwood School in inclement weather) a response would be chased by officers from Cambridge Education (CE).

The following supplementary questions were raised by the Panel:

- The support for 16 to 18 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEETs) was led by the youth service. Data was gathered and used to co-ordinate activity; these statistics compared reasonably favourably with neighbouring authorities and national comparitors. However, it was still possible for vulnerable individuals to fall into to the NEET category, and the matter could be addressed at a future meeting of the Panel.
- The percentage of young people progressing to higher education was good and demonstrated a steady increase over time. The number of

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looked after children was not particularly high, and any information on the wider context for this group would need to be compiled. The inspection in early 2013 had raised a series of concerns regarding looked after children (e.g. aspirations, attainment, outcomes) although the wide range of ability contained within the group made generalisations difficult. However, efforts were being made to focus on the issue (e.g. virtual heads). The area was also overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board.

- Funding for looked after children was £1,900 per year per child. £900 of this went to the school and £1,000 to the virtual head; schools were legally obliged to publish a report on how this money was spent on their website.
- Places for secondary schools had seen the highest level of online applications yet. Preferences had been given in the autumn of 2014 and processed using the agreed criteria, with over 90% of parents receiving a placement reflecting their preferences. In terms of first choice preferences these had been at around 62% in previous years and were now approximately 70%.
- For 2016, more school places should be available which would help improve this trend. However, it may also lead to some schools operating below their full capacity, which could impact on their funding and long term viability. At present, there were 50 forms of entry with another 38 required by 2022. This would need 7 new schools to be established in Slough.

41. Head teachers - Burnham and Churchmead

Churchmead School has been working on making the improvements required by the previous Ofsted inspection, with a view to the next visit due in the autumn of 2015. An interim visit from Ofsted acknowledged the progress being made in the relevant areas. The curriculum has been reviewed with improvements demanded across all subjects; curriculum areas which have been stronger (e.g. English) have exported their improvements to other areas such as science. Initiatives have also been launched to support this. One example is 'Pixel Edge' which has taken soft skills not recognised by examinations and developing student leaders on the basis of this work.

Churchmead School is relatively small which did cause some financial pressures. However, it also led to opportunities to develop more personalised working relationships with students and operate with more manageable class sizes. Churchmead was also looking to boost the numbers of students on its roll.

Approximately 80% of Churchmead's students were drawn from within Slough Borough Council's area; members would be welcomed if they wished to arrange a visit to the school to discuss developments.

Meanwhile, the head teacher at Burnham Park Academy had been in place since September 2014 and was focusing on improving the institution and the level of involvement from the local community. The school's governors are

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experienced and offered a high level of challenge and support. The school faced students with low expectations and was determined to improve this. The emphasis was on value added and working alongside the students to nurture them and raise the level of ambition amongst the cohort.

The Department for Education had recognised the leadership of the school as good in December 2014 and were due to visit the school again in March 2015 to corroborate their positive statements. In addition, the results for August 2014 had not been good and the institution was committed to improving attainment this summer. As part of this events were now organised to inspire students; for example, a series of speakers attended in November 2014 to commemorate World War I and discuss British values, whilst a holocaust survivor had also visited the school to give a talk. In addition students from the Royal Grammar School were engaged in joint working with Burnham students.

In terms of staff, the approach could be summarised as one of 'restlessness to improve', and the support from the E-ACT group of schools of which Burnham was part was also used. It was recognised that improvements in this summer's results would be pivotal in changing the wider perception of the school; as with Churchmead, a high level of students (approximately 60%) were drawn from Slough and members were welcome to visit.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The governing body at Churchmead School stepped down when the institution went into special measures. An interim board replaced it and remained in position until the end of 2014. A shadow governing body was now in place, with sub committees looking at areas such as uniform and the school's name to see if local perceptions regarding the school can be improved.
- At Churchmead School staff turnover had been significantly reduced in the last 18 months. Key appointments had also been made and an approach emphasising a uniformity of purpose across senior and middle leadership has been introduced and recognised by Ofsted. External training was also provided to support this effort.
- Results in English, Mathematics, Photography and Media had been good at Churchmead School. Efforts to improve value added results was being bolstered by the early entry system. At Burnham Park Academy, the minimum expectation for GCSE results was that 52% of pupils would gain at least 5 GCSEs between grades A* and C. The Academy operated with students of a generally lower ability than the national average, but results in the summer of 2014 had been below requirements.
- The Ofsted 2 year improvement plan was audited regularly; the school's improvement calendar operated on a termly cycle.
- In terms of developing leaders at Churchmead School, twilight sessions were organised to help teachers progress with the National Qualification for Middle Leaders. In addition, fortnightly sessions were held for these middle leaders to share examples of best practice.

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Weekly one to one meetings were held with middle leaders, and combined these efforts had allowed significant progress to be made in recent months. At Burnham Park Academy there had been a culture of educational underachievement, which needed resolute action from leadership with immediate impact. Burnham Park Academy would measure the success of its work by using the official value added measurements derived from the Department for Education. A major element of this would be through teaching towards the higher achievers at the school and challenging other students to meet those levels.

- Staff turnover had decreased and the challenges presented to staff were being met with enthusiasm and relevant activity. Whilst efforts had been focused on lower achievers, there had been some issues regarding challenging more able students although this would be rectified in future years. The head teacher was committed to undertaking classroom teaching personally and ensuring that they remained in contact with the realities of the school for staff and students. At Burnham Park Academy there had been two resignations; however, amongst the remaining staff the clarity of the school's new direction was leading to improved staff morale.
- Relationships with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had improved over the last two years; the school was now more self-reliant given the impact of this support.
- At Churchmead, only one member of staff was a newly qualified teacher. The issue was also not a major concern at Burnham Park Academy.

42. School places

The item on school places would be taken by Cabinet and return to the Panel in due course.

Members wished to note their displeasure with this process.

43. Forward Work Programme

Resolved:

- 1) That the item on the Corporate Parenting Panel should emphasise the issue of NEETs;
- 2) That the report on the Improvement Plan for 15th April 2015 highlight issues of safeguarding, grooming and how we ensure that children who are not high priority are protected;
- 3) That an item on the schools exclusion policy be added to the agenda for 15th April 2015; and
- 4) That an item on teacher recruitment be added to the agenda for June 2015.

44. Attendance Record

The attendance record was noted.

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45. Date of Next Meeting - 15th April 2015

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm)