

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 21st October, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Abe (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Brooker, Matloob, Morris, Pantelic and Rana

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton

Education Voting Co-opted Members

James Welsh (Catholic Diocese of Northampton)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bal

PART 1

12. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his daughter's attendance at Burnham Park Academy and his position as Governor at Churchmead School. Cllr Morris declared his stepson's attendance at Beechwood School, his stepdaughter's attendance at East Berkshire College, his position as Vice Chair of Baylis Court and his position as Vice Chair of the Transition Board at Godolphin Infants School.

13. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th July 2015

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting on 14th July 2015 were approved as an accurate record.

14. Member Questions

Panel members had requested information regarding recent results at Burnham Park Academy (35% of GCSE candidates receiving 5 A* - C grades) and Beechwood (39%).

Burnham Park Academy had faced historical difficulties and had now become an E-Act Academy. This had led to Slough Borough Council (SBC) having a lack of influence over the institution, as had the host authority (Buckinghamshire County Council). The school was currently part of the forward planning for school places; however, the Panel had the right to reflect its concerns over the level of performance in 2015's examinations.

Beechwood is a maintained community school. SBC's School Improvement Team was monitoring, challenging and intervening the institution. BTECs had become the main emphasis of the curriculum which had caused a slippage in its results as they were not recognised as equivalent to GCSEs. The school was now in the process of altering its curriculum. In addition, the students

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taking GCSEs had entered the school with lower levels of academic ability; 2016's cohort were anticipated to achieve better results. Achievement in English GCSE had been positive (over 70% A* - C grades) but mathematics was poorer (57%). In 2015, the school had operated with less than half the desired level of specialists mathematics teachers. 2016 had seen a full complement recruited. As a school with an Ofsted rating of 'requires improvement', Her Majesty's Inspectorate was visiting the institution and reporting satisfactory progress.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- The presence of very high achieving schools with national reputations in the area, along with above average migration levels, posed challenges to Slough schools. The report to the Panel on student achievement would break results into categories; this would take place after validation, with Primary Schools' results validated on 10th December 2015 and Secondary Schools yet to have a date confirmed.
- This would be addressed in the Cambridge Education Annual Report, and could also provide analysis on the issue of closing the gap for groups with lower attainment (e.g. Looked After Children, white boys from economically disadvantaged areas). The results could also be compared with neighbouring authorities and areas with comparable demographics.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel write to the head teacher of Burnham Park Academy reflecting its concerns over recent academic performance, and invite them to attend a future meeting of the Panel.
- 2) That the Panel also write on the subject to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

15. Improvement Plan - progress report

The Children's Services Trust took control of its responsibilities on 1st October 2015. The report provided an update on the issues raised by the original Ofsted inspection, SBC's responses and the impact of those responses.

Ofsted had identified the quality of practice, staff recruitment and leadership had been identified as central issues. SBC had improved performance in these areas, with Local Government Association peer reviews having monitored this progress. However, the service was still some distance from being the good and effective service required. At present, the Trust was auditing and benchmarking the position it had inherited, with the completed report on this to be completed in late 2015. This would then be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2016.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- Funding from the Department for Education and the recruitment of a specialist lead for recruitment had seen progress towards the target of

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68% for permanent front line staff. 3 campaigns had been run and newly qualified staff had been brought in. It was intended for 68% to be reached in November 2015, with the Commissioner for Social Care setting a target of 75% for December 2015. In addition, some agency staff had been in long term placements at Slough, leading to continuity of care if not assisting with meeting these targets.

- The drop in caseloads had been a result in the growth of teams since the investment.

(At this point, Cllr Pantelic entered the meeting).

- Agency staff had been personally introduced to the Director of Children's Services. A small number had become permanent, but many were choosing to remain as agency for career or financial reasons. However, the new Trust would not be permitting the continued use of agency staff given the issues related to their employment and associated costs.
- Many local authorities were reporting problems with recruitment given the national shortage. Those who were performing best on recruitment were addressing key themes such as training and systematic management.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

16. Team Around You

The Team Around You (TAY) project had reported to the Panel in January 2015, and was presenting the outcomes of the completed pilot. Care leavers had been the focus, with improved educational or employment opportunities the desired outcome; this had emerged from the Ofsted inspection mentioned earlier in the meeting.

TAY had held 51 meetings by 1st October 2015, addressing issues regarding 19 Young People. Of these cases, 8 had seen their programmes completed, but 7 had seen little progress. The focus was on getting care leavers and vulnerable young teenagers to complete their plans, with TAY having strengthened engagement and involvement in council departments in achieving outcomes for care leavers. As a result, it had been recommended that TAY should be adopted within care arrangements.

The most frequent issues encountered had been supported accommodation and access to therapy. In this regard, access to Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Services had been difficult, whilst other barriers which had often been faced included child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour.

The full scope of the initial project design had not been included in the eventual programme. Instead, the concentration had been on the participation of SBC departments in solving problems and ensuring that the care plans for

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children had progressed. Any future review should include therapeutic and mental health provision and supported housing needs.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- Engagement with SBC departments and sharing responsibility was crucial in securing better outcomes. The team of facilitators from outside Children's Services had been an innovation of TAY and led to a new approach to problem solving. This had also allowed departments to challenge each other effectively and adopt new ways of working. Engagement with SBC would be a vital new issue for the Children's Services Trust to resolve, and protocols were being developed on this matter.
- Mental and emotional health had been an issue in almost all of the 19 cases handled by TAY. The availability of specialist provision had been limited; private care was always considered if relevant, but costs also had to be taken into account.
- The TAY pilot would be reported to the Children's Services Trust, and supported as a means of supporting care leavers.
- Issues such as 'honour' based violence and female genital mutilation had not been included in the definition of child sexual exploitation.
- Whilst the pilot had been short, the stability it had created in successful cases had improved basic issues such as transport to school and the permanence of placements. By resolving such relatively simple matters, deeper matters could start to be addressed.
- Housing for children in care had not been included in TAY. However, all young people had contact with the Housing Team. Whilst specialist cases may lie outside of SBC's present capabilities, Housing and Commissioners were working to assist in these instances.
- The health care needs of those who were part of the TAY pilot had not been broken down and analysed given the time constraints and the work such research would require.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

17. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: that the following amendments be made to the Forward Work Programme:

- 1) That the Panel take an update on the Children's Services Trust on 3rd December 2015.
- 2) That the Panel take an item on exam results and closing the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children on 28th January 2016.
- 3) That the Panel take the item referred to them regarding the external audit into Slough schools on 28th January 2016.
- 4) That the Panel take the Cambridge Education Annual Report and an update on the educational contract on 28th January 2016.
- 5) That the Panel take the Children's Services Trust report on special educational needs provision on 9th March 2016.

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- 6) That the Panel take the item referred to them regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers on 9th March 2016.
- 7) That the Panel take an item on school improvement, the governance of schools and academies on 13th April 2016.
- 8) That the Panel take an item on Children's Centres on 13th April 2016.
- 9) That the Panel invite the head teachers of new schools / schools of interest to the Panel on 13th April 2016.
- 10) That the Panel request that the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th January 2016 be made a joint meeting of the Committee and the Panel should it receive an item on the Children's Services Trust's initial benchmarking exercise.

18. Attendance Record

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

19. Date of Next Meeting - 3rd December 2015

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.35 pm and closed at 7.58 pm)

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