

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 21st April, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Abe (Vice-Chair), Brooker and Matloob

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Jo Rockall – Secondary School Teacher representative

Maggie Stacey – Head Teacher representative

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Cheema, Morris and Rana

PART 1

48. Declaration of Interest

No declarations were given in relation to the agenda items.

49. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th March 2016

The Panel requested that the following points be noted in relation to the meeting held on 16th March 2016:

- The Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council (SBC) was challenged on her role whilst Children's Services remained under SBC's auspices.
- The Chair would look to hold the Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST) to account. This was as SBC retained responsibilities as corporate parents, was accountable for services by law and had invested £28 million in the transfer of responsibilities.

Resolved: that, subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2016 be approved as an accurate record.

50. Member Questions

No questions from members were received prior to the meeting.

51. Securing Improvements in the Experiences and Progress of Children Looked After and Achieving Permanence - Service Update

The report outlined the work already in progress and future developments planned for the service. The Ofsted inspection had placed a significant focus on the matter, with SBC and SCST now resolved to undertaking a collaborative approach. As part of this, corporate parenting arrangements had been reviewed.

The Corporate Parenting Panel had been supported throughout 2016, with the new Pledge having been constructed as part of this. The Pledge had been endorsed by Council on 19th April 2016, and had included significant

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discussion with the Slough Children In Care Council to place the concerns of local children at the centre of its formulation. The draft Corporate Parenting Strategy had also been revised, with the Corporate Parenting Panel due to receive in June 2016. As well as the Strategy, the Panel would receive a scorecard used to measure progress (which includes both quantitative and qualitative elements), revised terms of reference and a forward plan for its work (based around themed meetings).

The Virtual School had also received significant attention. A permanent Head had been appointed and was having an immediate impact. This was also helping to raise aspirations for looked after children (LACs).

SBC had supported SCST in these endeavours, especially through the Corporate Parenting Panel. Engagement was being increased through measures such as activity days, whilst the workforce was still adapting to its new priorities under SCST. However, the issue of the number of permanent staff remained.

The Panel raised the following issues in discussion:

- Predicted grades for LACs taking GCSEs in 2016 were better than those achieved in 2015. It was anticipated that 10 LACs would achieve 5 grade A* - C results, whilst pupil premium funding was now being spent more effectively. In previous years it had been underspent, but now almost all the £270,000 had been allocated (much on extra tuition to improve attainment), and child-specific plans had been central to this allocation process.
- The virtual head was now far more involved in monitoring the progress of LACs who had been placed outside the Borough. Schools within SBC's area had met with the new Head of Virtual School and had signalled their satisfaction with progress and the allocation of pupil premium funding.
- Whilst the Ofsted report of February 2016 had noted that the Virtual School held very little data for tracking educational performance, work was under way here. Welfare Call had been recruited to make services more robust, although SCST and SBC still needed to work on data sharing protocols to maximise the impact of their work. The Partnership Board was resolving this matter; however, SBC and SCST still needed to undertake some significant work on this.
- There was a national issue with the outcomes for LAC (e.g. proportion of LACs who became prisoners, poor mental health), and an emphasis was being placed on retaining them in education. However, there had been problems in Slough with schools being unaware of which students were LACs, or not being informed of their departure from school before it happened. A lack of continuity also needed to be addressed, both in education and across the experiences of LACs.
- Personal Education Plan (PEPs) providers were working with SCST to improve accessibility and procedures. Designated teachers had received some basic training to allow them to use the relevant systems; quality would be the focus of the next phase of efforts. Young people in

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the Reach Out Group have also used the system as part of a presentation they received.

- The Virtual Head had been shared with another institution; however, from June 2016 they would be a full time employee. At present, the Virtual Head was meeting all members of staff involved in the virtual school's work.
- Members of the Panel would be able to receive examples of PEPs and case studies of pupil premium funding allocation. This would assist them in gaining an understanding of these operations.
- The Youth Offending Team had been effective, despite the 31 LACs who had been cautioned or convicted of offences. There was no specific Youth Offending Panel, although other such groups (e.g. Placements Panel, Care Leavers Panel, Sexual Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference Panel) had been established. A multi-agency Youth Offending Board was in place.
- Significant improvements were being made to children's services (e.g. 'front door' services). However, more work would be required before children were no longer placing themselves in vulnerable situations.
- Key performance indicators had been compiled by SCST, and had been presented to SBC. It was intended that these would be completed by May 2016.
- The Corporate Parenting Panel Chair would discuss LAC performance with the Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel in autumn 2016. This would cover data on tracking the education and performance of LACs, the Pledge and the LAC Strategy.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the last and next Partnership Board meetings be circulated to members of the Panel.
2. That the possibility of training for members on LACs be investigated.

52. Cambridge Education - Annual Report

The contract was in its second year and was coming to an end on 30th September 2016. Cambridge Education, SCST and SBC were in discussions on arrangements to replace the current agreement; these were complex, and also subject to direction from the Secretary of State.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Members were concerned that the overlap between stated successes and areas requiring improvement left them unclear on the exact position of the service. This was due to the position which was the case at the start of the service; for example, Children's Centres had been inadequate, and had now been rated as 'requires improvement'. However, further work was need to move to good or outstanding.
- Whilst Ofsted school inspections had seen some institutions move from the lower two categories to good or outstanding, greater levels of achievement were desirable.

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- The relevant groupings of potentially vulnerable children were being identified in education (e.g. those in receipt of free school meals) and relevant strategies were being devised to support them. Children's Centres were increasing engagement with vulnerable children, including those not in formal education.
- Attendance at Children's Centres was managed by Cambridge Education and had been made robust. Ofsted inspectors had signed off the service at the end of the first day of their visit (indicating their satisfaction with safeguarding) but Cambridge Education remained vigilant. Action was taken in cases where children were on school rolls but not attending (e.g. joint work / information sharing with SCST), whilst those outside of formal education were pursued and placed in relevant settings.
- Casework has been recorded and reviewed leading to the reduction in cases held. This had been the result of significant multi-agency efforts as well as internal improvements.
- Previously, case files had not provided a clear and comprehensive account of the case involved. New procedures had ensured that all contact was now recorded, and this had reduced the number of case files categorised as 'difficult' (from around 600 to approximately 400). The Advisory Board had also looked at revised governance arrangements to provide a clear system of challenge and accountability and also help identify any gaps in provision.
- Preliminary targeting of services and the use of specialist teachers had helped with the early identification of children with needs. A data set was also being compiled to assist. A variety of inputs was also being used (e.g. psychologists) to compile the most comprehensive picture. However, whilst hospitals did refer cases based on health issues, Cambridge Education did not speculate on any potential hereditary aspects relating to care needs.
- It was also hoped that the improved services provided by the process outlined in the point above would make Slough an attractive place to come for several professions. Cambridge Education was also using its networks to disseminate that message across professions.
- The KPIs relating to children who progressed two levels between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for writing and mathematics had declined between 2014 and 2015. However, overall they had risen in the period 2010 to 2015. In addition, the matter concerned 8 schools in particular rather than the entire cohort; as a result, the focus was being placed here. In addition, the alterations in Key Stage 2 mathematics testing raised issues of comparability.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel's desire for value for money to be reflected in contract negotiations for the successor to Cambridge Education.
2. That the Panel would write a submission to Fiona Mactaggart MP for presentation to the Minister of State on teacher recruitment.

53. Termly Update on School Ofsted Reports

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This report would become a regular item for the Panel; whilst Ofsted inspections were only one element of assessing an area's educational provision, it was a crucial one. In addition, despite any potential moves towards academisation, local authorities would retain their accountability until legislation repealed that.

Progress within inspected schools had been positive, with the exception of Godolphin Infants. This institution was now part of a multi-academy trust and signs of progress had been seen (although Ofsted had yet to inspect since this possible improvement). The Infants School had previously been in the same multi-academy trust as the Junior School. This has come to an end and the Infant School has now joined Baylis mutli-academy trust. However, the Infants had been given no extra time before becoming subject to the Ofsted regime. Baylis was well aware of the issues and working on them, although the full time Head Teacher position remained vacant.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Godolphin Infants had a lead consultant (who was also a specialist in infant education) on site 2 days a week. A School Action Group also held meetings to examine progress, and presented the minutes of their meetings to Her Majesty's Inspectorate. Staffing remained an issue; there were 12 posts, and 10 of these left in September 2015. Whilst agency staff and newly qualified teachers had replaced them, major changes to the institution's operation were needed.
- Additionally, the Baylis Secondary school was attached to Godolphin Infants and rated as outstanding. It provided support to the Infants, but this did not address the need for primary education specialist knowledge.
- The governors, who had been criticised by Ofsted, were now all attending School Action Group meetings. Governors' meetings were then convened directly afterwards, in order to ensure that leadership was challenged whilst issues remained current. It was hoped that the benefits of this system would be demonstrable to Ofsted.
- The 'Slough community of schools' was working and helped improve services and standards. This helped local schools face a range of challenges and complex issues.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

54. Attendance Record

Resolved: that the attendance record be noted.

55. Date of Next Meeting - 19th July 2016

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.38 pm and closed at 8.31 pm)