

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 8th December, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Brooker (Chair), Anderson, Morris, Pantelic, Qaseem and Sadiq, Hamzah Ahmed (from minute 20 onwards)

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Maggie Stacey – Head teacher representative

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Mann and Jo Rockall

PART 1

15. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his daughter's attendance at Burnham Park Academy and his position as Governor at Churchmead School.

16. Minutes of the Meetings held on 19th July and 26th October 2016

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings held on 19th July and 26th October 2016 were approved as correct records.

17. Actions Arising

The Trust had not yet received notification on the outcome of its bid for the Government's Innovation Grant.

18. Member Questions

The member's question and the response to it was circulated to the Panel. The following point was raised in discussion:

- The present figure of 74 children offered places at secondary schools which did not correspond to their preferences would reduce as local provision increased.

19. Proposed New Co-Opted Member - Slough Youth Parliament

The proposed new non-voting co-opted position was introduced to the Panel. This position would be reserved for a representative of the Slough Youth Parliament; in this instance Hamzah Ahmed, but it would be retained after he had left the organisation and a replacement would be sought.

Resolved: that the appointment of a non-voting co-opted member representing Slough Youth Parliament be approved.

(At this point, Hamzah Ahmed joined the Panel).

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

20. Slough Joint Delivery Plan

Subsequent to the publication of the agenda papers, Ofsted had notified Slough Borough Council (SBC) as to the findings of its monitoring visit. This was released on 2nd December 2016, and would be used in assessing the progress of the Joint Delivery Plan. In addition, the Joint Improvement Board would continue its work in ensuring that the Plan was on track to deliver the necessary work.

In particular, Ofsted had noted that the correct areas were being prioritised. Ofsted would continue to visit Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST), with 4 monitoring visits prior to a full 4 week inspection (due by June 2018). The next visit will focus on care leavers. SCST would also ensure that the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will include education representatives.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The letter was largely in line with expectations, therefore has not caused a significant reappraisal of current objectives. The permanence of the workforce and the culture shift towards performance management remain key areas.
- The overall feedback from Ofsted was that the service was in the position it had hoped for by this stage.
- Around 100 children had been taken off Child Protection Plans very quickly prior to the establishment of SCST. A similar figure had now been placed on Plans; some of these were the same as those removed (but not all). SCST was taking timely action on children subject to Plans. SCST was committed to ensuring that those on Plans were, on average, remaining on Plans for longer than had previously been the case prior to SCST's arrival. Concerns should be raised by any cases where a child had been placed on a Plan twice within 2 years.
- The number of Looked After Children (LACs) remained relatively stable at around 180 – 200.
- An annual Complaints Report was compiled by SCST. This year, the number of complaints had risen; this was welcomed as a sign of openness on the part of service users. In particular, schools were reporting their concerns more regularly.
- At present, the Joint Improvement Board had 18 members. It was acknowledged that this was a higher number than was optimal; the numbers would be reduced, but the range of organisations represented would be increased.
- The last 2 meetings of the Joint Improvement Board had hosted practitioners. They had shared the issues raised by the work in areas such as child sexual exploitation and explored possible joint working arrangements. The forum also offered an opportunity for an open discussion on what was required by other organisations to bolster their work.
- The areas which SCST had prioritised at the start of its tenure were the 'front door' service and the setting of appropriate thresholds in

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

assessments. SCST had assessed that too many children were the subject of investigations initiated under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. Ofsted had raised the possibility that SCST was now very strict in its criteria for undertaking such investigations; SCST was reappraising its policy based on this feedback. SCST was also committed to keeping more concise and clear records of assessments.

- Adherence to the regulations for independent fostering agencies was currently being inspected; SCST was unaware of the final conclusions of this visit. In particular, SCST was committed to undertaking regular foster parent reviews.

Resolved:

1. That the annual Complaints Report be circulated to members of the Panel.
2. That the item on fostering and adoption be moved to 15th March 2017.
3. That an item on the Ofsted monitoring visit be taken on 19th April 2017.

21. Community Learning and Skills Service - 2015/16 Performance Report and June 2016 Ofsted Report

SBC's apprenticeship scheme remained at a high level of performance. Meanwhile, adult education qualification levels at entry level and levels 1 and 2 were above national averages. Of the seven apprentices who do not complete their qualifications, 3 gained employment, 3 went on to further education, with only one still seeking employment.

Inspectors identified that the delivery of classroom teaching was inconsistent. A number of areas required further improvement, including targeting setting, embedding of English and mathematics and the incorporation of British values into the curriculum. Teaching is delivered through a sessional tutor work force, with some tutors lacking the confidence to embed these areas within the curriculum. Managers failed to identify these areas of development.

To mitigate this, SBC was introducing additional measures to identify areas of development. Previously, annual observations had been used to evaluate tutors. Now, more regular walkthroughs were used and targeted at staff who were seen as needing support. External professional expertise was being identified to support Managers. The Shared Management Committee is also to be strengthened (including membership for an education expert to provide challenge to SBC).

Ofsted were due to return for another inspection in the summer of 2018.

Members were concerned and disappointed at outcome of the inspection and the decrease in quality.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Learning was recorded through learning plans, which were evaluated at the halfway point. SBC intended to raise the aspirations of students and ensure that they had SMART objectives to clarify their goals.
- Tutors were supported through staff meetings, the sharing of summaries of the lesson walk throughs and workshops (e.g. 2 had been held on the subject of 'Prevent'). Monthly drop in sessions had also been held but received limited attendance.
- Performance management was being used to enforce higher standards for tutors. The Ofsted inspection had served notice to the service as to the problems it faced; there had been too great a reliance on external observation, in future internal systems would increase in their influence. In addition, experts from local colleges were to be involved to shadow managers and improve support for the team.
- The closer contact between managers and staff had helped improve motivation. A shared Management Committee was offering challenge to the management team on the issues of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The English and Mathematic qualifications held by non specialist tutors were currently being audited. However, members of the Panel expressed concern that this was not previously the case.
- The service was exploring options for co-operation, including peer reviews.
- Attendance records needed to tally more accurately with real life classroom attendance. Whilst authorised absences were one factor in this discrepancy, more was required on this issue (although it is widespread in the sector).
- Tutors teaching English and mathematics had the appropriate teaching qualifications however a few tutors were not picking up grammar mistakes. Those who requested support would receive appropriate training.
- Tutors were also receiving help with identifying dyslexia amongst students and training on support for mental health issues. This would be revisited by the management team.
- Students were becoming more likely to declare matters such as Asperger's Syndrome. In such cases, they would be referred to Berkshire Autism or similar support groups.
- Courses were also designed on the basis of identified needs of the student population. This would often take the form of life skills (e.g. emailing, cooking on a budget, interview preparation).
- As well as walk throughs, achievement rates and retention rates were used to appraise staff. Action plans would be constructed to support improvement, as well as an annual review with targets and offers of additional support and training. The service recognised the need to have higher expectations of staff.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

22. Update on Post-Cambridge Education Responsibilities for Schools

The decision to return schools to SBC rather than Cambridge Education had been made in August 2016. This timeframe necessitated rapid action from SBC and co-ordination of activity to ensure that the 1st December 2016 date for the new arrangements could be met. In essence, this was achieved by dividing the areas of responsibility into 3 lots:

The first, education access and inclusion, had proved the least complex. Staff were transferred back into SBC employment on 1st September 2016. The second (early years, children's centres and education business support) was achieved by 1st November 2016, with preparation for an imminent inspection of children's centres also taking place. The final lot (school improvement and inclusive learning services) was the most complex, being completed on 1st December 2016. The period September to November 2016 had also seen SBC manage the exit of Cambridge Education.

The new arrangements had helped clarify SBC's role. In particular, SBC was now responsible for safeguarding, championing educational excellence and challenging any issues within provision of education. Meanwhile, responsibility for advocacy regarding vulnerable children had remained with SBC throughout the period where Cambridge Education had been operating. However, whilst this provided a clear set of priorities, it also offered a challenge in terms of undertaking these responsibilities whilst operating within the existing limited budget. As a result, SBC was keen to encourage Councillors to assist in this work, as their position was now more important than ever in terms of supporting SBC's ambitions. In addition, partners could also fulfil a vital role in augmenting SBC's efforts.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- SBC currently had a recruitment freeze; however, permission could be sought in exceptional circumstances. Given the loss of some key staff from Cambridge Education, there were key roles which required post holders. The Education Department would not be able to make appointments which could not be justified.
- Provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) could be complex given the fractured landscape within the area (e.g. children with temporary special educational needs). Table top monitoring was tracking cases, as was the process of compiling the annual results for SEND children. Close partnership work with SCST and the monitoring and reviewing of the effectiveness of plans was also part of this process. SCST provided specialist support on the matter, whilst clear communications with parents were identified as a key area.
- The Safeguarding Board could challenge any service provider. As part of this, information could be requested and systematically analysed, with follow up visits to pursue any lines suggested by research. Headteachers and other practitioners would be involved as appropriate. Compliance with safeguarding was monitored.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

- 2 Welfare Education Officers were working on reporting their findings; one sat in the MASH, the other working with the Head of School Services.
- Relationships with academies were complicated by the local situation; only one multi-academy trust was in operation, with most academies in Slough being part of smaller organisations. As a result, these may not have Executive Heads and require more complex partnership arrangements. 12 consultants were currently gaining intelligence on the local picture, with dialogue to be held subsequently once the assessment had been completed. Should it be required, a conversation with the Regional Schools Commissioner would be arranged.
- A business case was presently being compiled for the acquisition of a cloud-based schools data system (e.g. Pendulum). Schools had also signalled their initial support for such a move.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

23. Assessment and Examination Results for 2015 - 16

The Head of Education had been in post since 1st September 2016. The report presented the overall picture; SBC was seeking greater detail in the information. Overall, the picture was positive although Early Years and Foundation Stage was a more mixed situation. Primary schools were responding well to the new assessment system, whilst secondary schools were now subject to new measures of success (Progress 8 and Attainment 8).

Progress in phonics had been positive. At Key Stage 1, achievement was above average although science remained a concern. Key Stage 2 results had seen writing and mathematics achieve above average results, but reading was below average. SBC was investigating potential strategies to remedy this. Results for SEND children would be obtained on a school-by-school basis. Overall, in terms of ethnicity white British and white other children were now behind other groupings in Key Stage 2. This would also require analysis and action.

For students in receipt of the Pupil Premium, a gap remained on reading and mathematics although performance was better in writing. This would also be investigated, although it did mirror national trends rather than being unique to Slough.

Given its emphasis on 8 subjects (rather than the former 5 GCSE grades at A* - C), the bar for measuring secondary schools' performance was now more demanding. It also provided a more complex narrative on performance. The new curriculum for reading was also subject to new standards, which may require a period of a couple of years to become embedded and stabilise.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- A Progress 8 score of -0.5 or below for secondary schools would trigger an Ofsted inspection.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

- The use of Pupil Premium payments had to be published by each school on their website.
- There had been a major change in emphasis in terms of the focus of improvement efforts. In particular, universalism (e.g. inclusion of vulnerable groups) was being stressed. The picture in Slough secondary schools was positive, and whilst the situation in primary schools was less clear it was now clearly on their agendas.
- One method of boosting performance amongst groups with lower attainment would be through identifying schools which had high levels of achievement with these groups. They could then share support on these matters; whilst SBC did not directly control academies, there was shared interest in student performance. Areas such as culture, aspirations, learning styles and language acquisition would be probed, as well as working with families to identify social issues (e.g. housing, social care) which may play a role. The Teaching School Alliance may also be involved if appropriate, whilst some efforts to improve parent engagement within communities had already proved beneficial.
- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) had recently found the United Kingdom to be lagging behind other comparable countries. The role of this in Slough's levels of achievement would also be included in any consideration of trends.
- SBC would meet with the Regional Schools Commissioner 3 times a year. The Commissioner's relationship with the School Office Board was also evolving and would be central in future improvement efforts.
- Langley Hall Academy was using SBC as an adviser in its efforts to improve. At present, there were monthly visits which had been taking place since May 2016.
- SBC would review all SEND placements; SCST was also monitoring the situation.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

24. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: that, in addition to the previous minutes, the following amendments be made to the Work Programme:

1. Items on the following be added to the agenda for 9th February 2017:
 - Results by school for SEND children and ethnic groups.
 - Overall examination results (for information).
2. Items on the following be added to the agenda for 19th April 2017:
 - Second monitoring visit of SCST.
 - SEND (to focus on Teacher's Alliance and training).
 - Community Learning and Skills (to focus on the psychology service).
3. An item on the following be added to the agenda for autumn 2017:
 - Community Learning and Skills.

25. Attendance Record

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.12.16

Resolved:

- (a) That the Attendance Record 2016/17 be noted.
- (b) That in accordance with paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 of the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Councillor Mann's membership of the Panel be revoked having missed three consecutive meetings, and that a replacement be sought from the Labour Group.

26. Date of Next Meeting - 9th February 2017

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.02 pm)