

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 8th February, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Brooker (Chair), Kelly (Vice-Chair), Chahal (from 6.58pm), Chohan (from 6.43pm), N Holledge, Matloob and Qaseem

Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Hamzah Ahmed (Slough Youth Parliament)

Apologies for absence: Cllr Arvind Dhaliwal

PART 1

32. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his positions as Governor at Churchmead and Ryvers Schools. He also declared his membership of Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Foster Panel.

Hamzah Ahmed declared his membership of the Local Safeguarding Panel and his position as Governor at Cippenham Primary School.

33. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th December 2017

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2017 be approved as a correct record.

34. Action Progress Report

Resolved: That the Action Progress Report be noted.

35. Member Questions

The response to the written question was circulated.

Resolved: That the response be noted.

36. Update on Outcome 1 - "Enjoy & Achieve" Indicators from the 5 Year Plan

The report provided the Panel with an update of performance against 5 key indicators. These targets related to early learning goals and attainment; on the latter of these, the Panel would take more detailed information at its meeting on 14th March 2018. Performance could be categorised in the following manner:

- The gap between disadvantaged children and their peers across the Early Years Foundation Stage was stable, and slightly lower than the national average.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.02.18

- The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage had improved across all groups of children; again, it was now slightly above the national average.
- Key Stage 2 attainment had risen by 8%, consolidating its position as above the national average.
- The number of schools in the top 25% of national Progress 8 scores had fallen from 8 to 7. However, this did not mean that the remaining 4 schools were performing poorly.
- Average point scores per A Level entry had risen from 29.91 to 31.41, putting SBC schools above the national average (but not in the top 25% stated by the target).

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The data included Grammar Schools. Detailed information providing data for individual schools would be provided at the March 2018 meeting. In 2016 – 17, non-selective schools were also performing at a high level, rather than being underperformance being hidden by the results of selective schools.
- The category of 'disadvantaged children' included those in receipt of free school meals, children with special educational needs and students with English as an additional language.

(At this point, Cllr Chohan entered the meeting)

- The Progress 8 measure would be used in the reports to be given in March 2018. Progress 8 had to include English and Mathematics and was based on a comparison of performance at Key Stage 2 and in GCSEs. In essence, each grade achieved above expectations was equal to 1 point, meaning that an average of 1 point across a whole school meant that (on average) every candidate achieved a result one grade higher than would have been expected at the end of Key Stage 2 in every GCSE they took. Given its relative novelty, the measurement was still embedding and some schools were seeing their performance over estimated, and others under estimated. It was anticipated that this would soon decline as the measure became embedded.
- Specialist teachers in science and mathematics remained difficult to recruit. Given the inclusion of both these categories in Progress 8, this was having an impact on attainment.
- The gap between white British pupils and their peers had been included in the performance indicators on the basis of the Panel highlighting the issue in 2016 – 17. It was anticipated that the report to be presented in March 2018 would indicate that white British students not in receipt of free school meals were performing in line with Slough averages.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.02.18

37. Slough Children's Services Trust - Second Year Achievements

The update attached as Appendix A to the report had been produced at the end of 2017 and captured the achievements of SCST's 2nd year (rather than discussing all elements of their work). SCST now had permanent Senior and Middle Management Teams, with 84% of the workforce of the organisation now being permanent. SCST had also received a £1.4 Innovation Grant, which had been used to recruit staff and initiate programmes such as 'Inspiring Families' (which had been created to combat domestic abuse).

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The 4th Monitoring Visit by Ofsted had highlighted the pace of change as an area in need of improvement. SCST had raised this with Essex County Council (who were acting as mentors) and held a diagnostic session to specify areas where this could be taken forward. The 5th Monitoring Visit had recently published its letter of advice to SCST; this had confirmed that the pace of change had improved, and would be circulated to Panel members.

(At this stage, Cllr Chahal entered the meeting)

- The Pupil Premium meant that £1,500 of additional spending was allocated to each Looked After Child in education. This funding was used to create individual Personal Educational Plans (PEPs) for all such students. These PEPs were used to drive individualised spending appropriate to each child's needs. All Pupil Premium cash was now being spent appropriately.
- 37% of local children were attending University once completing compulsory education. LACs were not attending University at the same ratio, although the small number of such students meant that statistics could easily be skewed by individual cases.
- Around 1/3rd of LACs were achieving 5 A* - C grades at GCSEs; this statistics was around 15% nationally.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

38. Fourth Ofsted Monitoring Visit (September 2017)

The 4th Monitoring Visit had focused on processes for Public Law Outline (PLO); this was the process for cases where progress was not being made and legal approaches were considered. These could involve SCST becoming the custodian of the children in question. Ofsted had previously concluded that PLO was not used sufficiently frequently in Slough; more families were now subject to PLO procedures, although Ofsted found that cases could lack managerial oversight. However, it should be noted that Ofsted had not found a case where a child's safety was compromised; rather, the issue was one of record keeping. Further oral testimony offered strong indications that workers were aware of the issues in their cases, but were not creating an audit trail.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.02.18

This left SCST in a position where it was compliant with requirements but needed to improve the quality of its records. The Independent Reviewing Officers also provided evidence of improved engagement, whilst there had been a case of a child who had repeatedly been missing not having been recorded with sufficient depth.

This led to a situation where the level of practice was mixed; the consistency of this needed to increase to achieve a 'good' rating at the next Ofsted Inspection. However, the Corporate Parenting Panel had been a highly positive change, whilst the 5th Monitoring Visit had noted many of the required improvements noted above.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- SCST was confident it was on the correct trajectory. The 2015 position saw all areas subject to the Ofsted inspection to be 'inadequate'. Given this, SCST had focused on ensuring safety as its top priority; Ofsted had recognised this in their Monitoring Visits, and now SCST was concentrating on improvements across all areas. However, to have attempted to improve all areas simultaneously from the inception of SCST would have been an impossible task.
- The fact that Ofsted had stated they were not concerned about safety should therefore be seen as significant progress in this context.
- The stated aim of SCST was to move services to a 'Good' rating within 3 years. Given that 2/3^{rds} of this had now elapsed, SCST had no reason to doubt that this was still achievable. The relationship between SCST and SBC was also positive and conducive to this, with corporate parenting and the Virtual School examples of this. The provision of evidence for these improvements and written analysis of cases were the central element which needed improvement, as well as management oversight. SCST was also aware that quality of recording was vital, rather than producing large amounts of paperwork that lacked a clear audit trail.
- Another key improvement had been the introduction of hubs used for reflective discussion. These used role playing to allow social workers to explore all sides of a case rather than becoming too invested in one partisan narrative.
- The Improvement Board had been established to look at the actions Ofsted had requested at its last inspection; these were almost completed. However, these were now being replaced by more ambitious targets set at a higher level. SCST was aware of the need to constantly improve and pursue an upward developmental arc. It was confident this was being maintained, although acknowledged the level of work this required and the vulnerability of any progress made should that area be neglected.
- SCST and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board provided good governance and were bolstering this work.
- An Ofsted Inspection was very different to the Monitoring Visits. The former lasted 4 weeks, evaluated hundreds of cases and would take an overview of all elements of SCST; the latter was far shorter and

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 08.02.18

narrower in focus. However, SCST would not be undertaking a mock Ofsted given the workload necessitated by having Monitoring Visits every 12 weeks. SCST would be made aware when the series of Monitoring Visits was being concluded, and would expect the full inspection to follow 12 weeks from this time.

- Intelligence on cases was being captured through return interviews and multi agency events such as Sexual Exploitation Missing Risk Assessment Conferences. However, in cases where young people were not engaging with the service such work could be difficult. The National Youth Advocacy Service was used to try and initiate dialogue in these instances.
- Children should be visited every 6 weeks; this could be eased to 3 months in long term placements, although more regular contact was often taking place. The isolated case where a child had not been visited for 4 months had occurred when the relevant worker had left, the worker inheriting the case had taken sick leave and the matter had not been picked up. SCST had taken action to ensure this was not repeated.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

39. Forward Work Programme

Resolved:

1. That an item on the Ofsted report on adult education be added to the agenda for 14th March 2018.
2. That the item on school place planning be moved to 18th April 2018.

40. Attendance Record

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

41. Date of Next Meeting - 14th March 2018

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.42 pm)