

SEND Written Statement of Action - Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group Minutes - 13 December 2022

Attendance

Members of the SEND Written Statement of Action - Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group

Councillor Adam Collinge
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre
Councillor Stephanie Haynes
Councillor Louise Miles
Councillor Rita Potter

In Attendance

Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education
Helen Bakewell	Head of Inclusion & Empowerment
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any matter on the agenda.

3 **Notes of the Previous Meeting (27.9.22)**

The notes of the previous meeting on 27.9.22 were approved as a correct record.

The group discussed the role of the group and concern was expressed about the risk of duplication with work being done by other groups with a responsibility for reviewing progress against the actions detailed in the Written Statement of Actions (WSOA).

The Scrutiny Officer commented on the remit of the group and advised that any changes would need to be presented to Cabinet for approval.

The group discussed the likely date of the next OFSTED inspection and agreed to await the outcome of this report before agreeing a further date to meet.

4 **Culture of Inclusion Update Report November 2022 - presentation**

The Chair invited Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education, to give the presentation. The Deputy Director gave a short presentation commenting on the background to the Culture of Inclusion Project, the specific aims of the group, the five workstreams and the key achievements to date.

The agenda items for 5,6, 7 and 8 were presented for background information.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the future activity in supporting and building on the achievements in meeting the objectives detailed in the WSOA.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the positive feedback following monitoring inspection visits by Ofsted which highlighted the significant progress made in achieving actions detailed in the WSOA.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the work being done to consult with young people with SEND about the planned changes in a series of workshops.

The group asked for a copy of the action plan developed during the sessions to be shared and commented that this is a good example of positive public engagement work.

The group were invited to comment on presentation and supporting documents.

The group welcomed and acknowledged the progress made in addressing issues detailed in the WSOA.

The group expressed concerns about the delay in introduction of a new IT system and that it has been identified as being a key risk in the presentation.

The group queried if employees had made any requests for specific support or assistance in the meantime. The group also queried if the Council's IT services has been involved in checking that the new system will meet the needs of the service and address the concerns highlighted in the inspection.

The group asked for assurance about plans for ensuring employees responsible for delivering the service are confident in using the new system and how information about changes to the system will be publicised to parents of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children and young people.

The Deputy Director of Education referred the group to supporting documents about inclusion work and added that further details will be available on progress of actions linked to the Local Offer and Communication workstream to a future meeting.

The Deputy Director of Education commented that no additional resources are currently needed to support the Capital One system and advised the group that the project is being support by the Council's ICT team, which was not possible under the previous contract arrangements.

The Deputy Director of Education acknowledged that time would be needed to train professional and parents in using the new IT system and ongoing training for everyone to be able use it. The level of training will depend on the choice of the new system and what, if any, additional resources are needed.

The group discussed the challenges facing families who may not have good quality internet access and commented on the need to consider the issue of 'digital poverty' when developing the new IT system.

The group discussed the factors contributing to the delays in completing the education, health and care plan (EHCP) and highlighted that a reduction in delays in the assessment process is dependent upon information provided by health professionals and the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) (the SENCO is a teacher with responsibility for assessing, planning and monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)) , while accepting the responsibility of the Council in working with partner organisations to meet deadlines in the assessment process.

The groups discussed the long-term benefits of investing funds on SEND children and young people at an early stage and the important role of schools in funding this work with the appropriate level of resources and specialist training. The panel discussed concerns about inconsistency of practice and the early identification of SEND children and young people between schools.

The Deputy Director of Education acknowledged the challenges presented by SENCOs with different levels of skills and experience and advised the group about the free online resources available to all schools and to members of the SENCO network to help improve the situation.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the range of challenges facing classroom teachers and how this may impact in the difficulty in identifying the difference between the poor behaviour of a child and behaviour linked to SEND or other additional needs.

The group discussed plans for a new Ofsted inspection framework and the difficulties this will create when assessing the progress against the current WSOA which was based on the previous inspection framework.

The group discussed the date of the next meeting of the group and agreed to consider this further following the next planned inspection by Ofsted which is expected in March 2023.

Resolved:

1. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group welcomes the progress and achievements made in response to the WSOA.
2. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group agreed to discuss a date for the group to meet next following the visit by Ofsted to review progress of the WSOA in March 2023.
3. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group comments on the presentation to be noted and information provided where agreed.
4. The members of SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group to submit the achievement and concern from the presentation to be included in the report to SFCYP and Cabinet updating them on progress against WSOA.

No panel comments.

6 **Written Statement of Action Update presentation - November 2022**

No panel comments.

7 **Wolverhampton Adviser Monitoring Review**

No panel comments.

8 **Guidance - Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook**

No panel comments