

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 8 February 2017

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Harbans Bagri
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Daniel Warren

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Bill Hague	Service Manager School Places and Transport
Neil Jarman	School Improvement Adviser – Primary
Andrew Wolverson	Head of Service – Early Years

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:

Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Christopher Haynes

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (7 December 2016)

Correction

Cllr Louise Miles should have been recorded as having attended the panel meeting on 7 December 2017.

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016 be approved, subject to the correction, be signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

Minute 6 – City of Wolverhampton – Vision for Education 2030

Bill Hague, Service Manager School Places and Transport attended the meeting to respond to queries about the plans to manage the increased demand for secondary school places in Wolverhampton. The Service Manager School Places and Transport agreed to present an update report to a meeting of the panel in June 2017 with details of the planning work.

The Service Manager accepted that the 'bulge' in school numbers at primary schools level will lead to increased demand for places at secondary school. There is currently a very high demand for schools places and limited options to create extra spaces, particularly at the most popular schools.

Resolved:

The Service Manager School Places and Transport agreed to present an update on plans for managing the demand on secondary school provision to a meeting in June 2017.

5 Pupil Premium

Neil Jarman, School Improvement Adviser – Primary, presented a briefing paper on pupil premium funding and how the money it is being used to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and close the gaps with their more affluent peers.

The School Improvement Adviser commented that pupil premium funding represents a considerable sum that schools can use to support the learning of children. The School Improvement Adviser commented that the spending of the pupil premium funding is at the discretion of the Head teacher and the school governing body.

The School Improvement Adviser commented of the effective work done by Elston Hall and St Stephen's Primary schools. The panel were advised that both schools had received national recognition about how they were using funding from pupil premium creatively to improve educational attainment rates. The School Improvement Adviser advised the panel the education service recognises that some children have limited life experiences and the pupil premium has been used by some schools to support their speech and writing skills and on-going learning.

The School Improvement Adviser commented on the important role of parents in supporting the learning of disadvantaged children and the highlighted the benefits of schools using pupil premium in a targeted way. A reference was made to Bushbury Primary School buying clocks for 100 children aged 6-7 and as a result attendance and punctuality has improved. In another example, a school has used funding to recruit lunchtime supervisors to help create a more positive and supportive environment, which all contributes to getting children ready to learn.

The School Improvement Adviser gave other examples of how schools have used the pupil premium to give children a broader life experience based on an assessment of their needs.

The School Improvement Adviser commented that pupil premium funding is about pooling resources to bring about benefits to a wider group of children and improve educational attainment levels.

The panel commented on the importance of local schools being encouraged to share examples of good practice about how the pupil premium could be used. The panel also commented on the importance of involving children in decisions about how pupil premium could be used to support their learning and development. The School Improvement Adviser commented on the important role of the school governing body to review the effectiveness of how pupil premium funding is being used. There is an expectation from the service that a senior teacher at the school and a nominated governor would review the use pupil premium. The School Improvement Adviser commented there is further information on the use of pupil premium by Ofsted and schools will be asked to evidence how they are using the fund to support the learning of disadvantaged children.

The School Improvement Adviser commented that schools are encouraged to work collaboratively.

The panel welcomed the report and the comments on the use of pupil premium. The panel also welcomed that within schools there is a designated school teacher and school governor with special responsibility to review the impact of pupil premium funding. The School Improvement Adviser explained that the use of pupil premium will depend on the make-up of the school, but it should support the delivery of the school improvement plan.

The panel queried the continued funding of pupil premium in the future. The School Improvement Adviser explained that the current award is part of a four year settlement and the expectation is that it will continue into the future. The award is treated as a separate budget. The panel discussed the risk of pupil premium funding being used to make up shortfalls in other school budgets rather. The School Improvement Adviser explained that pupil premium money should be spent on meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged children and the service will continue to challenge and monitor schools about how they are using the budget. Furthermore, Ofsted inspectors will continue to monitor how schools are using the budget.

A report is presented by Ofsted to Parliament on the progress on the use by schools of pupil premium and it is an integral part of the inspection process. The School Improvement Adviser added that during an inspection they will talk to groups of disadvantaged children as part of the evidence used to evaluate the performance of a school and their use of pupil premium.

The panel welcomed the report and the briefing on the work being done to monitor the use of pupil premium funding

Resolved:

The panel agreed to receive a report in six months on progress, examples of local good practice, and sharing in good practice in how schools are using pupil premium funding to support the educational needs of disadvantaged children.

6 **Improving outcomes within the early years**

Andrew Wolverson, Head of Service – Early Years, introduced the presentation and gave an overview of the background to the development of the early year's strategy. The Head of Service commented that all Wolverhampton nursery schools have been rated by Ofsted as being either good or outstanding.

The Head of Service commented that there had been an 80% take-up of the 2-year-old early education entitlement offer in Wolverhampton.

The panel discussed the definition of school readiness and the expectations of what parents have about what tasks their child should be able to do when they arrive at nursery school. The Head of Service commented on the public consultation about the strategy and the work being done to develop a definition of 'school readiness' that the majority of people would understand.

The panel suggested that current definition should be altered as follows:

"Children will be able to express their needs, feelings and wants. Children will be excited, enthused and demonstrate a willingness to learn both inside and outside of the classroom

A school will ensure that children feel heard and understood by their practioners."

The Head of Service commented that the strategy covered the period in a child's life, from conception to five years, and will bring together a range a professionals working to support families and the development of children.

The panel discussed how the strategy deals with health challenges such as rising levels of childhood obesity. The Head of Service commented on the work planned to improve information sharing between professionals, so that health issues can be tracked and their progress monitored and the appropriate action taken to support them.

The panel discussed the reference to social class in the slide on underpinning value and suggested that this be extended to include wanting to good maternal health.

The Head of Service commented on the importance of parental engagement and the promotion as parents as being the child's best educator. The Head of Service commented on the range of events aimed at supporting parents and children.

The Head of Service commented on the promotion of 'parent champion' scheme. The scheme is aimed at raising their profile and supporting other parents.

The panel discussed the role of school mentors in engaging and building confidence in parenting.

The Head of Service commented on the importance of early engagement with parents and accepted that some parents that may have not a good experience of the learning in school. In response, to this issue support is offered to parents to support their reading and writing skills, so that they better help their children.

The panel discussed the important impact of Sure Start and the focus on early child development and welcomed the aims of the strategy in building on this foundation.

The panel discussed the issue of workforce development and the quality of childcare provision.

The Head of Service commented that number of child-minder's ratings had moved from improving to good, but accepted that more work needed to improve the quality of education given to young children. The Head of Service commented on the work done to engage with parents from east European countries who have recently arrived in the City and the planned consultation.

The Head of Service explained that educational material is being developed that can be translated into a number of different languages. In addition, information aimed at parents has been published on the Wolverhampton Information Network site and also in Community Hubs. The service aims to give parents and carers different ways to access information and advice to support the learning and development of their children. The panel discussed the issue of cultural difference and the importance of supporting parents who may not feel confident in their ability to support their child's education.

The Head of Service explained that a launch event for the early years strategy is planned after it has been presented to Cabinet. The Head of Service explained that the strategy is a 'live' document and will therefore change in response to comments. The strategy will be supported by an action plan.

The panel welcomed the strategy.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the Early Years Strategy document to be included in the consultation response presented to Cabinet for approval.
2. The panel endorse principles and values in the Early Years Strategy document.