

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 6 July 2016

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Harbans Bagri
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)

Employees

Alexandra Jones	Assistant Director - School Standards
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Councillor Daniel Warren
Councillor Rupinderjit Kaur
Cyril Randles
Rosalie Watkins
- 2 Declarations of interest**
No declarations of interest were made relative to the matters under consideration at the meeting.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting (13 April 2016)**
That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 5 – Brighter Futures: Improving Our Schools' Annual Report 2016

The panel queried the schedule for presenting reports on the performance of pupil referral units in Wolverhampton. Chair advised that a briefing paper would be sent to the panel in September and a more detailed report to the meeting on 29 March 2017.

5 **Parental Ambassadors Programme**

Alex Jones, Assistant Director – School Standards, introduced the report and gave an overview of the programme to engage with new community groups in Wolverhampton.

The Assistant Director commented that the programme has been successful in engaging parents, the majority of whom have been employed as ambassadors in the schools. The programme is funded and supported by a number of different organisations. The Assistant Director commented that five women from the first wave, who were previously unemployed, are now working part time. In the second wave, 10 parents have been successful in getting part-time employment in schools as community ambassadors.

The panel queried the areas where the scheme is operating. The Assistant Director agreed to send the panel details.

The Assistant Director explained the process for allocating parents to a school. The panel discussed the role of school teaching assistants and the potential for them to do a similar role as the parent ambassador, in view of the language skills that some may already have. The Assistant Director explained that the parent ambassadors have a different role and the need has been identified by the school. The scheme is also partly funded by Big Lottery which has specific criteria about how the money should be used.

The panel queried the time-limited nature of the programme and concern about its long term future. The Assistant Director explained that the programme is managed by the local authority but supported by schools and different local agencies such as Adult Education Service and the Refugee and Migrant Centre.

The panel queried the support given to parents of white British boys who are not performing well, compared to other groups. The Assistant Director accepted that this was an issue but explained that there are already a number of existing programmes aimed at engaging parents in this group to support schools to improve educational performance.

The panel queried the source of the reference in the report that 70% of community parents were unaware of their rights and responsibilities of parents in a UK setting. The Assistant Director agreed to provide more detailed breakdown of the background to this statement and share it with the panel.

The panel commented on the financial implications section of the report which does not make reference to the programme being funded by the Big Lottery.

The Assistant Director explained that Council support for the programme is provided by funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Assistant Director explained that the programme is being delivered at no cost to the Council.

The panel welcomed the report and thanked employees and parents involved in the programme for their achievements.

The panel requested details of any future celebration events of the ambassador programme. The Assistant Director agreed to advise the panel.

The panel recommended that the report be presented to the Equalities Advisory Group. The Assistant Director agreed to share a copy of the report with the group.

The panel requested a progress report on the programme in July 2017.

Resolved

1. The panel to receive a progress report on the ambassadors programme to a meeting in July 2017.
2. A copy of the report to be shared with Equalities Advisory Group.
3. The Assistant Director agreed to provide a briefing paper about the background to this statement that 70% of community parents were not aware of their rights and responsibilities in a UK setting.
4. The Assistant Director agreed to provide details of where the ambassador programme is be offered to parents.

6

School Improvement and Governance Strategy (revised version) 2016

Alex Jones, Assistant Director – School Standards, introduced the report and gave an overview of those parts of the strategy which had been updated since the previous draft was published in September 2014.

The Assistant Director commented on the positive impact of the strategy in improving school performance. The number of schools in the City judged to be good or better by Ofsted have increased from 63% (September 2013) to 79% (April 2016). The Assistant Director is hopeful that this figure will increase to 81% when the next Ofsted results are published.

The panel queried the difference in the process described in paragraph 3.4. and 2.2 in the School Improvement and Governance Strategy when a school has concerns about the performance of an academy. The Assistant Director confirmed that the reference in 2.2 is incorrect and will be changed to state that the local authority can raise concerns with the Regional Schools Commissioner

The Assistant Director commented that unvalidated key stage 2 data results will be published in September 2016 and the validated results in January 2017.

The Assistant Director commented on the current structure of team providing support to primary and secondary schools in Wolverhampton. The size of the team has been reduced significantly over time. The Assistant Director explained that academies can buy in support services needed from the school improvement team

The panel discussed the powers of a local authority to intervene where there are concerns about the performance of a school. The Assistant Director commented that a number of schools have been issued with warning notices about their performance in the last two years, in addition the local authority has used its powers to replace six school governing bodies. The Assistant Director reassured the panel that the service is willing to take robust action where there are concerns of the educational performance of a school. The strategic responsibilities of the local authority to improve schools are detailed in the Educational and Inspections Act 2006.

The panel discussed the local authority's relationship with academies. The Assistant Director explained the progress made to improve working relationships with academies and an acceptance of importance to engaging with them. Academies are responsible for teaching 40,000 Wolverhampton children and the local authority has responsibility for child and is held accountable for the results.

The Assistant Director commented that the local authority has a good relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Assistant Director briefed the panel on work done to support schools considering setting up multi-agency trust and proactive work done with other academies, such as the British Sikh School.

The Assistant Director commented on current vacancies for school governors. Academies do not have to appoint school governors and are registered company. The details of the board should be published on records at Companies House.

The panel discussed the opportunity for young people to get involved in the governance of their school. The Assistant Director explained that pupils have the option of joining the school council and the local authority encourages schools to listen to their voice when making decisions.

The panel welcomed the report and supported the recommendations.

Resolved

The panel support the revised School Improvement and Governance Strategy document.

- 7 **Local Authority School Improvement Inspection - Self Evaluation Document.** Alex Jones, Assistant Director – School Standards, introduced the report. The Assistant Director commented that Wolverhampton is not scheduled to be inspected but that it was important to make proper preparations for an inspection.

The Assistant Director commented that Wolverhampton was now the highest performing local authority compared to other authorities in the Black Country, and is second to Solihull in the West Midlands.

The panel commented that the report highlights the local authority is going in the right direction and they were very pleased with the results. The panel wanted to pass on their congratulations to staff in the education service about the progress made and the professionalism shown which has delivered the improved performance.

The panel queried the reason for there not being a reference to pupil premium in the report.

The panel commented that had tried in the past to get details about how schools were using pupil premium funding and the outcomes but only made limited progress. The Assistant Director commented that the report makes reference to disadvantaged pupils. As a result of reduced staff resources it would be difficult to do the necessary research across 115 schools in Wolverhampton to collate the information.

The panel welcomed the report.

Resolved

The panel welcomed the progress made and support the plans for a possible Local Authority School Improvement inspection of the service.

The meeting closed at 18:49