SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 5 December 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Gill Furniss (Chair), Karen McGowan, Mohammad Maroof, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Lynn Rooney, Colin Ross, Andrew Sangar (Deputy Chair), Ian Saunders, Diana Stimely, Stuart Wattam and Clive Skelton (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, Education Non-Council Voting Member

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1.   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1   Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nikki Sharpe and Councillor Clive Skelton attended as the duly appointed substitute, and Councillors Talib Hussain and Cliff Woodcraft and Gillian Foster, Joan Stratford and Alison Warner (Education Non-Council Voting Members).

2.   EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1   No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1   There were no declarations of interest.

4.   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1   The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd October 2013, were approved as a correct record, subject to the list of Members present, which was amended by the addition of Councillor Stuart Wattam to the list.

4.2   The Committee received and noted a paper containing an update on actions undertaken following the proceedings of previous meetings.

5.   PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1   There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

6.   EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS 2013

6.1   The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, on Educational Attainment 2012/13. The report, which had

been requested by the Committee at its meeting held on 5th September 2013, contained details of the educational outcomes for children and young people who were eligible for end of Key Stage assessments, tests or public examinations in summer 2013. The report also contained details on the achievement of identified groups of learners, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Special Educational Needs (SEN), English as a Second Language (EAL) and Looked-after Children (LAC).

6.2   In attendance for this item were Iain Peel, Interim Director, Inclusion and Learning Services, and Pauline Anderson, Strategic Lead – Primary.

6.3   Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The rankings referred only to performance nationally and in comparison with other Core Cities, but the statistics in terms of rankings in comparison with other local authorities, including neighbouring authorities, could be circulated on request. Following investigations into the Early Years' outcomes for Rotherham MBC, it had been identified that similar work was being carried out in Sheffield, but Rotherham had been undertaking such measures for a longer period of time, resulting in such changes in rankings. Whilst considerable work had been undertaken to find out how other local authorities had shown bigger improvements in terms of their outcomes, it was accepted that more work in this area was required. As part of the planned work, secondary schools would be attending a workshop, led by a school in Gateshead, to share ideas and receive advice on teaching methods in terms of mathematics, with similar events planned to be held for other subjects. There were also plans for officers to meet with Governing Bodies of a number of schools in January 2014, in order to look at how schools could make improvements in terms of educational outcomes.

- Whilst ESCAL, the award winning City-wide Literacy Strategy ensuring that 'Every Sheffield Child is Articulate and Literate', was being used through a partnership approach, aiming to further embed literacy across services to families, children and young people and ensuring that there is a cohesive approach to meeting children's and young people's needs, it was accepted that the Strategy could be used more effectively and that there was a need for more targeted focus work in this area. A programme focussing on phonics had been undertaken last year, which had proved very effective and had resulted in a considerable improvement in terms of attainment levels. However, there were only three officers in the ESCAL Team, which limited the scope of work which could be undertaken.

- Officers had met with the Headteachers of groups of primary schools in specific geographical areas to discuss educational outcomes in their respective areas. As part of such discussions, the Headteachers of those schools which historically had an intake of higher performing pupils had been requested to look at how attainment levels at those schools could be improved even further. If attainment levels at such schools were not as high as expected, the Headteachers were asked why this was the case. It had

been identified that even small improvements in terms of outcomes for such schools could result in big changes to the Authority's rankings, but most importantly, to the children involved.

- Considerable work had, and would, continue to be undertaken in terms of future proofing, which had included the establishment of a number of learning partnerships in the City, whereby Headteachers would work with each other to work on and develop ideas to improve all aspects of schools' operations. Funding from schools had been used to commission additional capacity. It had been identified that the most important factor of a successful school was the leadership, so special efforts had been made to ensure good quality Headteachers were appointed to the City's schools and it was hoped that with good leadership, together with a number of shorter-term interventions, including training for teachers, teaching standards would either improve, or remain at a high level.

- Whilst it was accepted that schools would suffer in terms of attainment levels when their more able pupils moved to other schools, including the University Technical College, the schools and the Authority needed to focus on the progress of all pupils, wherever they studied. In terms of the reporting of exam results of pupils at the University Technical College, although it was not accountable as a directly-maintained school, the Council would still monitor the progress of pupils, as with the Academies, and raise any concerns regarding attainment levels directly with all schools and academies.

- It was no longer the role of the Authority to provide direct support for Headteachers. Officers now broker partnerships with other schools so they could share good practice and look at other ways of offering help and advice. The National College for Teaching and Learning Programme was also used for leadership development.

- The recruitment of Headteachers had been a major concern nationally for a number of years and it had been known that schools had advertised for posts up to two to three times, and received no applications. This was considered to be due to the challenging role and high level of accountability. The Council often provided help and advice to Assistant Headteachers in terms of them acting up prior to applying for the post of Headteacher. Teaching School Alliances provided a range of support for school staff and the Local Authority had actively promoted Executive Headships to secure good leadership.

- Whilst it was difficult to find 2013 national comparisons in terms of attainment levels regarding Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) pupils and Looked-After Children (LAC), although the gap was narrowing slowly, it was believed that Sheffield's attainment levels were still below the 2013 national average. Whilst attainment levels of Looked-After Children were lower than the main cohort of children in schools, consideration should be given to the progress made by children on an individual basis as some will have made good levels of progress.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a)   notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the responses to the questions raised; and

(b)   thanks Iain Peel and Pauline Anderson for attending the meeting.

7.   ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR THE PUPIL PREMIUM

7.1   The Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, submitted a report on the attainment of children eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium had been introduced two years ago, and was designed to support schools in boosting the attainment of disadvantaged children and to reduce the gap between this group and their more advantaged (non-free school meals) peers.

7.2   The report also contained details of the best practice workshop, led by the Sutton Trust, and jointly commissioned by the City Wide Learning Body and Birley Community College. The workshop focussed on the research undertaken by the Trust to measure the input which different strategies had on improving outcomes for pupil premium children, and the Toolkit which schools could employ to improve such outcomes was appended to the report.

7.3   In attendance for this item were Iain Peel, Interim Director, Inclusion and Learning Services, and Pauline Anderson, Strategic Lead – Primary.

7.4   Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- It was not yet clear what impact pupils receiving free school meals would have on the pupil premium. It was believed that the Department for Education would have devised a formula in terms of calculating entitlement, presumably linked to entitlement to Income Support.

- The fact that the use of Teaching Assistants had a very low, or no impact, for a high cost, as highlighted on the Sutton Trust's Toolkit, emphasised the importance of quality leadership and teaching. If schools had both these qualities, they would have a far more positive impact on the Teaching Assistants, and therefore, hopefully improve outcomes for pupil premium children.

- Whilst the statistics in terms of comparisons between attainment levels of pupil premium children and their cohort were not yet available, there was evidence of the gap between the two groups narrowing at all educational levels, apart from Key Stage 1.

- Details of how and what individual schools were spending their pupil premium on should be published on their websites.

7.5   RESOLVED: That this Committee:-

(a)   notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the responses to the questions raised; and

(b)   thanks Iain Peel and Pauline Anderson for attending the meeting.

8.   WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

8.1   The Policy and Improvement Officer, Diane Owens, submitted a paper containing the Committee's Work Programme 2013/14, indicating that there had been two amendments to the version circulated with the agenda, which included a report on Looked-After Children and Care Leavers at the meeting on 6th February 2014, and an update on the Early Years' Service at the meeting on 3rd April 2014.

8.2   Ms Owens referred to the work of the Nutrition and Hydration Working Group, which had been established by the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, indicating that, to date, the Working Group had focussed its work on the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and had recently produced a final report on its findings. Together with this report, the Working Group had recommended that its work be extended to including observation visits to Weston Park, Royal Hallamshire and Jessops Hospitals. The Working Group also indicated that it would be happy to undertake an observation visit to the Children's Hospital, on behalf of this Committee, and report its findings to both this and the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

8.3   RESOLVED: That (a) the Committee notes the contents of the Work Programme 2013/14, including details of the changes now reported; and

(b) accepts the offer from the Nutrition and Hydration Working Group now reported.

9.   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1   It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 6th February 2014, at 2.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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