

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

Meeting held 22 November 2012

PRESENT: Councillors Gill Furniss (Chair), Keith Hill, Talib Hussain, George Lindars-Hammond, Karen McGowan, Mohammad Maroof, Lynn Rooney, Colin Ross, Andrew Sangar (Deputy Chair), Nikki Sharpe, Clive Skelton, Stuart Wattam and Diana Stimely (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, Education Non-Council Voting Member
Gillian Foster, Education Non Council Voting Member
Alison Warner, Education Non-Council Voting Member

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rob Frost and Councillor Diana Stimely attended the meeting as the duly appointed substitute. An apology for absence was also received from Paulette Kennedy.

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 25th October 2012 were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions.

6. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2011/12

6.1 James White introduced a presentation outlining the latest provisional results in relation to educational attainment in the City. The presentation comprised two main areas, firstly the results for children aged 5-16 and, following this, the performance of vulnerable groups in the City.

6.2 Also attending the meeting for this item was Iain Peel (Assistant Director, Inclusion and Learning).

6.3 Members asked a number of questions and responses were received as follows:-

- The new criteria for children eligible for free school meals for a six year period would be measured in the future and were not included within the results presented.
- The recent Government White Paper had been clear that the role of the Local Authority was the commissioning of high quality places and championing performance outcomes. The role no longer focused on providing support but to challenge schools or the fourth sector.
- The Local Authority would ensure that the improved results for 2012 would not lead to complacency. Discussions were still being held with secondary schools. Individual support would continue to be brokered with individual schools where required. Discussions were being held with governing bodies about outcomes and different areas of support were being signposted. The main difference was that the Local Authority was no longer the provider.
- The floor standard would likely increase by 2015 to 50%. The uplift in Key Stage 4 results masked the problem that some traditionally high performing schools were moving the wrong way downwards to a floor standard which was moving upwards.
- There had been recent changes made to the inspection framework and there was no such thing as satisfactory anymore. Anything not categorised as good required additional measures to be implemented although the category 'Requires Improvement' was not an OFSTED category of concern.
- The issue of positive challenge for governors was key and easy to understand information would be sent to governors as well as top 10 questions which a governor may like to ask to gain an understanding of the reasons for performance.
- There was no lesser expectation for any pupil in the system. Every child was expected to make at least two levels of progress in the primary phase and three levels of progress at the secondary stage. However, it was recognised that not every child may reach the expected level for their age. Attainment in terms of threshold correlated with deprivation.
- Differences in performance between primary and secondary could be because of the more diverse curriculum at secondary level. At the primary stage pupils had the same teacher throughout and there was less range in terms of what was expected. The practice within secondary teaching was more variable as was the case across the country.
- It was hoped that the impact of the pupil premium would be reflected in the narrowing of the gap at key stage 4 within the next couple of years.

- It was worthwhile to examine OFSTED reports alongside attainment results to assess a school's performance. However, schools were not inspected every year.
- The foundation stage showed the most extreme differences in terms of performance. This stage had the highest performance levels but also the widest gap. It was clear that if success was achieved with a child at ages 3-5 this would make things easier moving forward.

Members made a number of comments as follows:-

- The results were encouraging and showed the consistent approach of the Local Authority and maintaining strategies was beginning to show successful outcomes.
- Comparing the performance of local authorities across the country was often problematic due to the different socio-economic bases of local authorities.
- What made a difference in Sheffield was that that the City truly cared about the importance of a child's education and that was not always the case elsewhere.
- Improving performance was not an overnight process and the upturn in the last four years was unprecedented. However, there was no room for complacency and similar improvements should be expected in 2013.
- Schools had reported very positive feedback about the quality of the data released and the accessibility of the information.

6.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

(a) noted the information received; and

(b) requested that the thanks of the Committee be extended to officers for the interventions undertaken which had led to the improved results in educational attainment in 2012.

7. EVERY CHILD IN EDUCATION EVERY DAY

7.1 The Deputy Executive Director, Children Young People and Families submitted a report providing an update on the "Every Child in Education Every Day" strand of work which was ensuring that the Council were regularly addressing the key issues relating to behaviour and attendance across the City, at both an operational and strategic level. The report also highlighted the relationship between current policy in relation to the number of exclusions across the City and the function of Sheffield's Pupil Referral Unit which was named "The Sheffield Inclusion Centre".

7.2 Attending for this item was Alena Prentice (Assistant Director, Inclusion and Learning Services).

7.3 Members asked a number of questions and officers responded as follows:-

- The Attendance Strategy was now published on the Council's website and a report would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.
- Many of those pupils included in the number of pupils referred to the Pupil Referral Unit had undertaken a Vocational Skills Programme from between 1-3 days and were doing the work as part of a package of core skills outside of school. The programme was subject to its own quality assurance and attendance monitoring.
- In relation to academies, the Council's role was being an advocate and champion for all young people. Where it was suspected that the Council needed to intervene the issue could be referred to the Education Funding Body.
- The role of governors was key and they needed to be provided with the tools to challenge the effectiveness of schools. The Local Authority needed to provide further training and information for governors to enable them to handle challenging behaviour and monitor attendance levels.
- There had often been an over reliance on the use of supported transfers through the pupil referral unit. Variable practice existed across the City and it was important to share good practice where appropriate.
- There was a correlation between poor attendance levels at the foundation stage and challenging behaviour at key stage 4 level.
- A child's attendance at school was primarily the role of the parent. It was important for the Local Authority to engage with parents on this issue and to remind parents of their responsibilities. Schools also had a proactive role and the first key point in the attendance strategy was the school's own management of attendance.
- When the school's attempts to resolve problems with a pupil's attendance level had reached an end the engagement of multi-agency teams was crucial and they needed to look at the issue from a whole household approach.
- The role of the Local Authority was to target support for schools and to ensure schools were setting targets for attendance.
- The issue of whether a pupil's absence was authorised or unauthorised was for the school to determine.
- Absence due to religious absence was currently recorded as authorised but it was felt that this should be marked as not required to attend as it was with Christian holidays.

- There was a strong presumption against taking holidays in term time. However, it was the school's decision whether to mark such holidays as authorised and it was important to consider the context of the pupil when reaching a decision on this.
- The reason for at least 2/3 of absences was due to illness. However, the most serious category was persistent absence. There had been a high level of school to school transfers which needed to be addressed and the school had a role in this by effectively engaging with the parent.
- A triage process had been established which worked as an internal filtering process to look at each individual case and establish whether the parent had agreed the transfer. The parent would be contacted to establish the rationale for the transfer. It was important to minimise the level of disruption for pupils at this stage.
- The role of the pupil premium was to support educational outcomes and uses such as to pay for transport for a child unable to afford bus fares were acceptable. There had been an increasing scrutiny of schools to account for how they spent the pupil premium.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a) notes and endorses the Every Child in Education Every Day strategic work and its commitment to raising standards across the City by focussing on access to appropriate action for some of its most vulnerable groups of children;

(b) supports the establishment of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships; and

(c) requests that the guidance on authorised and unauthorised absences be circulated to Members of the Committee.

8. POLICY UPDATE

8.1 David Molloy, Policy Officer (Scrutiny) provided Members with a detailed overview of several key policy updates, including;

- Repeal of the duty on OFSTED to conduct an annual Children's Services Assessment of each local authority in England;
- Record numbers of men teaching in primary schools – but more still needed;
- Prime Minister: More new Free Schools than ever before to raise standards and increase choice;
- Views sought on which 2 year olds should get free early education;
- £10 million literacy catch-up programme for disadvantaged pupils; and
- Return of the Office of Children's Commissioner

8.2 He also referred to a recent Motion agreed by Council that a Joint Committee

would be arranged between this Committee and the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to examine the University Technical College and what support could be provided to the College. Provisional dates for this meeting had been agreed by the Chair's of the Committee's and these would be circulated for Members who wished to take part.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 24th January 2013 at 2 pm in the Town Hall.