



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 8 November 2007

Subject: Request for Scrutiny

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 17 October, the Executive Board considered a report on progress being made at South Leeds High School, following the Ofsted report which placed the school in special measures.
- 1.2 Executive Board in particular noted the 2007 5A*-C (including English and Maths GCSE) results, and made the following resolution

"That the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) be requested to examine the processes whereby Key Stage Four results are initially published with a view to ensuring that the level of risk that incorrect results may be published are minimised."

- 1.3 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that a Board ".....shall consider a request from any source to conduct an Inquiry into a matter falling within its Terms of Reference. Any such request must be submitted in writing and shall be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting when the Board shall consider whether an Inquiry is appropriate and if so what form that Inquiry is to take."

2.0 Options for Investigations and Inquiries

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Board is required to consider whether an Inquiry into this matter is appropriate and if so, what form that Inquiry shall take.
- 2.2 When deciding whether the Board will pursue a request for Scrutiny, it is important for Members to consider the request in the context of the Board's terms of reference, its existing Work Programme and commitments.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Members may also wish to take account of the following explanation, provided by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds:

The Executive Board meeting on Wednesday 17 October highlighted an inconsistency in the provisional results we published in August.

My colleagues have picked this issue up as cleaned and verified data is now being released by the DCSF. It has come to light that there has been a misunderstanding of the performance indicator definitions at two High Schools. On results day, the schools provided data, in good faith, indicating the number of young people who had achieved 5+A*-C including English and Maths. However, the data received by Education Leeds, from the DCSF, shows that in these two cases the figures were inaccurate interpretations of the new definitions of 5 A* - C including English and maths. This is the first time that we have experienced anything like this during the six years that Education Leeds has managed this process with our schools. The problem, this year, is caused by the fact that the new, gold standard, indicator for the current year states that the English and maths qualifications must be GCSEs, and that any other Level 2 qualifications in English and maths do not count. This is where the schools concerned have made the miscalculation, the figures they provided to Education Leeds included alternative Level 2 qualifications in English and maths which last year would have been acceptable.

- 3.2 Members may also wish to take into consideration the following extract from the Scrutiny Board's inquiry report on secondary achievement, published in April 2006:

"Despite the flourishing range of routes and pathways to accredited achievement that is developing in Leeds, we were concerned about a potential future threat to the positive focus on achievement for all. This arises from the forthcoming national requirement for pupils to demonstrate functional skills in English, maths and ICT. We agree that it is important for all pupils to develop these skills to improve their prospects of employment. Our concern is about how this functional skill level will be measured and recorded nationally, and thus how individual pupils and learning providers will be judged. We hope that there will be a range of appropriate accredited routes for demonstrating these skills. If the benchmark for league tables is linked purely to GCSE pass rates, then this would be a backward step, and we would ask the Chief Executive of Education Leeds to lobby against any such move. We acknowledge that there will be further work for Education Leeds and the Learning Partnership in helping prepare and support schools and young people for these changes.

Recommendation 13

That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds works towards ensuring that there is a range of appropriate accredited routes for demonstrating functional skills."

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 The Board is requested to consider the request for scrutiny.