Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Inquiry into education standards in Leeds

Draft terms of reference

1.0   Introduction

1.1   At its first meeting of the year, the Scrutiny Board identified education standards as a topic for one of its major inquiries for the forthcoming year.

1.2   The choice of this topic accords with priorities in the Vision for Leeds and the Children and Young People's Plan, and also reflects a recurrent theme identified from the Board's regular consideration of performance management information. It builds on the inquiry into secondary achievement conducted by scrutiny on 2005/06, and the inquiry report published in April 2006.

1.3   In order to decide on an appropriate and manageable focus for the inquiry, the board commissioned a small working group from amongst its membership to scope the inquiry. The working group met with officers from Education Leeds School Improvement team on 19th September 2007.

1.4   The working group began by exploring the extent to which the issue of education standards could potentially encompass a whole range of activity under each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. However it was recognised that, in order to be effective, the inquiry would need to identify a specific area of focus.

1.5   The working group were concerned to identify areas where the Scrutiny Board's input could add value to work already underway to improve education standards in Leeds, having regard to the proposed timescale for the inquiry.

1.6   The group identified two particular areas which were strong contenders for the focus of an inquiry: the 14-19 age group, and early years and primary transition. Having considered the two areas, the working group decided to recommend that the Board's inquiry this year focuses on trying to help break the cycle of underachievement at the 14-19 stage of the education system and to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.

1.7   However this is accompanied by a strong recommendation that an inquiry is prioritised in the next year on those entering the education system.

2.0   Scope of the inquiry

2.1   The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on current support for young people at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) in Leeds. The inquiry will focus on the following areas:

- How pupils are identified as at risk of becoming NEET
- The support provided to individual pupils in schools to support their attainment and to prepare them for adult life
- The role of school improvement services and curriculum development in supporting the achievement of this group of pupils
- Attendance, behaviour and exclusion strategies to encourage pupils to engage in their education
- The role of other services such as extended services and study support, and family support services
- Tracking of pupil destinations and achievement post-16

3.0   Comments of the relevant director and executive member

3.1   To be sought from Cllr Harker, Rosemary Archer and Chris Edwards.

4.0   Timetable for the inquiry

4.1   The inquiry will take place between January and March 2008, with a view to issuing a final report in spring 2008.

4.2   It is envisaged that the inquiry will take place over three sessions. The inquiry will conclude with the publication of a formal report setting out the board's conclusions and recommendations.

4.3   It is planned that the inquiry will include a range of visits to service providers to complement the evidence gathered in formal sessions.

5.0   Submission of evidence

5.1   The following evidence will be considered by the Board

5.2   **Session One – 17th January 2008**

To consider background information from Education Leeds on the strategic framework to support the following key areas of the inquiry:

- The role of school improvement services and curriculum development in supporting the achievement of this group of pupils
- Attendance, behaviour and exclusion strategies to encourage pupils to engage in their education

5.4 **Visits**

A number of visits will be organised to enable the Board to meet with relevant service providers, and where possible with pupils. Exact locations to be confirmed.

5.5 **Session Two – 13th March 2008**

To consider background information from relevant providers on the following key areas of the inquiry:

- How pupils are identified as at risk of becoming NEET
- The support provided to individual pupils in schools to support their attainment and to prepare them for adult life
- The role of other services such as extended services and study support, and family support services
- Tracking of pupil destinations and achievement post-16

5.6 **Session Three – 13th March 2008**

To consider any outstanding issues arising from session one

To consider members' findings from the visits and to discuss issues arising from the visits with officers

To consider the board's emerging conclusions and recommendations to inform the production of the final inquiry report

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:
- Education Leeds staff
- School representatives
- Providers of relevant support services including council services, other statutory providers and voluntary agencies
- Young people

7.0 Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 Following the completion of the scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

8.0   Measures of success

8.1   It is important to consider how the Board will deem whether its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

8.2   The Board will look to publish practical recommendations.