

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby, R D Feldman,
J Lewis, K Renshaw and B Selby

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Mr C Macpherson	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)**

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mr T Hales	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Representative

96 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the February meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), particularly Councillor J Lewis, who had recently been appointed to the Board as a replacement for Councillor Murray.

97 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Annex 2 to both the reports referred to in Minute No 105. Both documents are designated as exempt on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public are present there would be disclosure to them of the exempt information so designated under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(1) and 10.4(2) and on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, because Education Leeds has a duty to secure improvement and increased confidence in the schools concerned and this would be adversely affected by disclosure of the information.

98 Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared personal interests in relation to agenda items 8, 9 and 10 due to their respective positions as either school or college governors (Minute Nos 103, 104 and 105 refer):-

Councillors Bale, Chapman, Cleasby, R D Feldman, J Lewis, Renshaw, Selby, Mr E A Britten, Mr C Macpherson, Mrs S Knights and Mrs S Hutchinson.

Councillor Cleasby and Professor P H J H Gosden both declared personal interests in relation to agenda items 8, 9, 10 due to being members of the School Organisation Committee (Minute Nos 103, 104 and 105 refer).

Councillor Cleasby declared a personal interest in relation to agenda items 8, 9, 10 due to being a member of the South Leeds Fostering Board (Minute Nos 103, 104 and 105 refer).

Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to agenda items 8, 9 and 10 due to being a member of the Leeds Admission Forum (Minute Nos 103, 104 and 105 refer).

Mr T Hales and Ms C Foote both declared personal interests in relation to agenda item 9, due to being members of a trade union which had been invited to submit evidence to the Board as part of the inquiry into the Implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority (Minute No 104 refers).

99 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors A Harrison, V Kendall, L Mulherin, Mr P Gathercole and Ms T Kayani.

100 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2007 be approved as a correct record.

101 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No 64 – ‘Implementing the Children Act – Update’

In response to enquiries about the availability of information relating to the staffing structure of the Director of Children’s Services Unit, which had been sought at the previous meeting, the Board was assured that such information would be circulated without delay.

Members then took the opportunity to extend their thanks to the Director of Children’s Services for keeping the Board informed of the current position with regard to recruitment within the Unit.

102 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

With regard to Minute No 64 entitled, ‘Scrutiny Inquiry – Narrowing the Gap’, Members highlighted the impact that the Ofsted inspection process had upon schools and recognised that such a process could also impact upon those areas which were being addressed as part of the Narrowing the Gap initiative.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8th January 2007 be noted.

103 **Quarter Three Performance Report**

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which highlighted the issues from across the council arising from the quarter 3 performance information which had been supplied in line with the new monitoring arrangements. Also appended to the report for Members' consideration was the quarter 3 data relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) portfolio.

Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds, Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive of Education Leeds and John Maynard, Performance Manager, Children's Services Unit, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Having received a brief overview of the background to the statistics detailed within the report from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- Following Members' enquiries into how the targets detailed within the report had been set, the actions which were being taken to meet them and how such targets compared to those established for other Local Authorities, the Board noted that the targets were agreed with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and that performance in Leeds was comparable to similar cities and statistical neighbours. A discussion relating to the nature of the targets set then followed;
- Members raised concerns over the link which had been made between the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions and the level of behaviour in schools. Having provided details of a specific individual who had been reported on numerous occasions for incidents relating to behaviour, the Board also raised concerns about the support given to staff when reporting such incidents. In response, Members were advised of the actions being taken to improve the relevant reporting mechanisms and in relation to the specific example given, the Chief Executive of Education Leeds undertook to pursue that particular case outside of the meeting. Board Members then identified behaviour issues as a potential area for further scrutiny;
- Clarification was sought on several issues arising from the report including those relating to fixed term exclusions, the methods used to improve attendance levels in Leeds, the procedures in place to compare attainment levels between authorities and the strategies which had been established to ensure that attainment targets were met in the future;
- Members requested a list of Leeds' statistical neighbours;
- Members made enquiries into the existence of targets for those young people on vocational pathways. In response, the Chief Executive of Education Leeds assured the Board that Members' comments on the issue would be taken into consideration;
- The Board enquired about the role of Area Management Boards (AMBs) in terms of provision for those young people who had been excluded from school and asked that information relating to the role of AMBs in Leeds was provided to Members for consideration;
- Members emphasised the fact that target based information, as detailed within the report, could not solely illustrate educational attainment and

- discussed how the statistics within the report could be revised in order to gauge performance in a more holistic way;
- In conclusion, the Chair suggested that the Scrutiny Board's first meeting of the new municipal year could be used to reflect on some fundamental issues within the Board's remit.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the information contained within the report and appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the issues identified by the Board as potential areas for further scrutiny be noted.

104 The Implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority - Inquiry Session One

Further to Minute No. 93, 11th January 2007, a report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the information to be considered as part of the first formal session of the Board's inquiry into the implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority.

The Chair opened the debate by stating that this inquiry demonstrated the potential of Overview and Scrutiny to assist the Council and Executive with policy development, and to afford non executive Members the opportunity to shape the delivery of services.

Appended to the report for Members' information were the agreed terms of reference for the inquiry in addition to a report from Education Leeds which provided the Board with information about the legislative changes which had occurred and what the introduction of Trust Schools would mean in practice.

Chris Edwards, Chief Executive, Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive and Pat Toner, Strategic Manager – Human Resources, all of Education Leeds, in addition to Patrick Murphy of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and Jack Jackson of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) were all in attendance to answer Members' questions and to submit evidence to the Board.

Having received a brief overview of the information detailed within the report from Education Leeds, the Chair invited the trade union representatives present to submit their views regarding the implications of the introduction of Trust Schools in Leeds. In summary, the following issues were raised:-

- The admissions arrangements which could be adopted by Trust Schools and how such policies could impact upon other schools in the area;
- The governance arrangements for Trust Schools and how the levels of community involvement in such arrangements would be affected;
- The impact upon the terms and conditions of service for employees working within Trust schools;
- The effect that the introduction of Trust Schools would have upon the standard of education delivered throughout Leeds.

A question and answer session then ensued which related to the possible impact that the introduction of Trust Schools may have upon the Local Authority. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The implications arising from the potential increase in the diversity of education provision in Leeds following the introduction of Trust Schools and the extent to which Trust Schools would have the ability to maintain an individual ethos;
- The ways in which Trust Schools and their partners would respond directly to the specific needs within their local community;
- How Garforth Community College in partnership with Trinity and All Saints Higher Education College had been identified as one of the pathfinder projects established to develop ideas about how the Trust arrangements could work;
- The impact of the proposed mixed economy of education provision in Leeds and the wide ranging implications that such a model could have;
- The potential for Trust Schools to operate over a number of Local Authorities and how such an arrangement would work in practice;
- The changing role of the Local Authority from the provider to the commissioner of education services and the implications of the shift in role;
- The form of governance arrangements which would be adopted by Trust Schools, whether this could lead to a decrease in community involvement in such schools and the extent to which governors' links to local schools would be maintained;
- The ways in which Trust Schools would operate their admissions policies, how such policies would function in relation to the Schools Admissions Code and the ways in which the admissions appeals process for Trust Schools would be administered in Leeds.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the issues raised during the first formal session of the Board's inquiry into the implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority be incorporated into the draft version of the Board's final report.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 10.55 a.m. during the consideration of this item and Mrs S Knights left the meeting at 11.30 a.m. at the conclusion of this item)

105 Annual Report on Standards in Leeds Schools and Biannual Update on Ofsted Inspections and Schools Causing Concern

Further to Minute No. 49, 12th October 2006, Members received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced two reports from Education Leeds entitled, 'Annual Report on Standards in Leeds Primary Schools and Biannual Update on Ofsted Inspections and Schools Causing Concern' and 'Annual Report on Standards in Leeds High Schools and Biannual Update on Ofsted Inspections and Schools Causing Concern', both of which had been previously submitted to Executive Board for consideration. Also appended for Members' information was a report from the Royal Society

entitled, 'A degree of concern? UK first degrees in science, technology and mathematics' to which Members had referred at a previous meeting.

Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds and Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive of Education Leeds were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Having received a brief overview of the report from the Royal Society, Members discussed the issues arising from the current lack of skilled people in the fields of science, technology and mathematics and questioned how the situation could be addressed.

Following Members' enquiries into the reasons why attainment levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 had declined and the actions which were being taken to address the issue, the Board was advised that such a trend had been partly due to rigorous assessment in Leeds. A discussion relating to the assessment practices undertaken by other Local Authorities then ensued. In conclusion, the Board identified the decline in attainment at Key Stage 1 and the reasons for such a decline as an area for further scrutiny.

The Board made specific reference to the ethnic groups which had experienced a decline in attainment levels at Key Stage 1, enquired about the reasons for such a decline and the actions being taken to address the issue. In response, Members noted that the methods used to address the situation had focussed upon personalised intervention and learned that the reasons for such a decline often related to the length of time an individual had been in the country and the economic background of the young person. The Board then discussed the provision in place to support the variety of languages spoken in schools since the Community Language Team had disbanded.

With regard to the summary of Ofsted reports for both Primary and High schools, Members discussed the ways in which the Board could interface with those schools which had recently taken part in the inspection process and suggested that further consideration could be given to the most practical and appropriate ways in which the Board could liaise with representatives from such schools. Members also proposed that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector could be invited to a future meeting of the Board in order to discuss the issues arising from the inspection process in Leeds.

The Board then discussed the issues arising from the summary reports for those schools which fell within the 'Extended Partnerships' category. Having noted the reasons why certain schools were listed in this category, Members considered the ways in which schools undertaking the Ofsted inspection process could maximise their results.

Following consideration of Annex 2 to both the reports designated as exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(1) and 10.4(2), which were considered in private at the conclusion of this agenda item, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the reasons for the decline in attainment levels in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 be identified as a potential area for further scrutiny by the Board;
- (c). That further consideration be given to the ways in which the Board can appropriately interface with schools who have recently undergone the Ofsted inspection process, and that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector be invited to a future meeting of the Board in order to discuss the issues arising from the Ofsted inspection process in Leeds.

106 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's Work Programme, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st February 2007 to 31st May 2007 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 24th January 2007 and the minutes from the Leeds Admission Forum meeting held on 23rd November 2006.

Following Members' comments concerning the draft Scrutiny Board inquiry report into Adoption in Leeds, which had been previously circulated to Members for consideration, the Board was asked to forward any suggested revisions to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser.

In response to enquiries, Members were advised that the draft Scrutiny Board inquiry report into Youth Services was intended to be circulated to Members prior to the March 2007 meeting of the Board for consideration at the pre-meeting, with formal approval scheduled for April 2007.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report, be noted.

(Mr C Macpherson left the meeting at 12.30 p.m. during the consideration of this item)

107 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 8th March 2007 at 9.30 a.m.
(Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.00 a.m.)

(Meeting concluded at 12.32 p.m.)