

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 21ST APRIL, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors M Coulson, G Driver, A Lamb, B Lancaster,
P Latty, J Lewis, K Maqsood and B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms N Cox	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Ms J Ward	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
--------------	--------------------------

91 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

92 Late Items

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept a late item, agenda item 16, Appointment of Co-opted Member. The report was submitted late as the election result was only announced on Monday 18th April, which was after the time of agenda despatch. (Minute No. 93 refers)

The Chair also admitted to the agenda as supplementary information, a copy of the response to the recommendation tracking report. (Minute No. 103 refers)

93 Appointment of Co-opted Member

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which sought the Scrutiny Board's formal confirmation of the appointment of a co-opted Member to the Board.

The Chair welcomed Jacqueline Ward to her first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board confirms the appointment of Jacqueline Ward as the parent governor representative (secondary) for a four year term of office from 21 April 2011.

94 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Coulson declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, Fostering Inspection Action Plan and Update on Foster Carer Recruitment, in his capacity as a Member of LCC Fostering Panel. (Minute No. 101 refers)

A further declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting. (Minute No. 97 refers)

95 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Gettings, W Hyde and Morgan and Co-opted Members; Mr Granger, Ms Morris-Boam, Ms Kayani and Ms Foote.

96 Minutes - 17th March 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

97 Annual Standards Report - Primary Schools

The Scrutiny Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 11th February 2011, which provided an overview of the performance of primary schools at the end of 2009-10, as demonstrated through statutory national testing and teacher assessment. The report also outlined some of the key challenges and priorities for primary schools.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following Executive Members and officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Councillor Dowson, Advisory Member of Executive Board (Learning)
- Mariana Pexton, Deputy Director of Children's Services
- Paul Brennan, Interim Director of School Improvement, Children's Services
- Christine Halsall, Head of Primary School Improvement and National Strategies, Children's Services
- Brian Tuffin, Head of Secondary School Improvement and National Strategies, Children's Services.

Christine Halsall, Head of Primary School Improvement and National Strategies, introduced the report and the following areas were discussed:

- The need to improve outcomes and close the gap for the lowest achieving children.
- Inconsistent results from some ethnic minority groups and those children with English as an additional language.
- Concern that there were too many satisfactory performing schools in Leeds and the need for further improvement.
- Confirmation that 20 schools were in the process of appointing head teachers and the strengths and weaknesses associated with this.
- Success of early intervention programmes at KS1.

Members' questions were then invited and in brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Concern about poor performance against the national average, particularly those with English as an additional language and the uptake of free school meals. The Scrutiny Board was advised that there was a need to introduce more robust leadership arrangements and provide additional support at some schools. The development of partnership arrangements was assisting with this.
- Concern about children arriving at school undernourished and the important role of breakfast clubs in addressing this.
- The development of an Action Plan in relation to underperforming schools – a comparative analysis of other authorities had been undertaken and a targeted strategy was now in place.
- Concerns about instability caused by changes in leadership and the need to consider structural changes, particularly the need to explore federation opportunities, e.g. Windmill and Low Road Primary Schools.
- Concern that stress was one of the main contributing factors in the high turnover of head teachers. It was advised that turnover at inner city schools was higher than at other schools. The average turnover at inner city schools was 5 years.
- Succession plans were in place to assist with the recruitment of head teachers, e.g. local leaders programme, investing in diversity programme to ensure Deputy Heads, etc, were equipped with the right skills to access senior leadership positions.
- The Scrutiny Board requested a more detailed statistical breakdown of comparator authorities to be included in future reports.
- Support for parents and acknowledgement of recent improvements in relation to healthy eating.
- The low take up of Children's Centre places in some areas of the city.
- Good practice in relation to child and adolescent mental health.
- The role of clusters in addressing issues in relation to attendance.
- Concerns that School Improvement Partners (SIPs) were no longer a statutory requirement – The Scrutiny Board was advised that LCC was continuing to fund this in part.
- The role of the family in improving outcomes for children, particularly in relation to healthy eating.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

(Councillor Selby joined the meeting at 10.30 am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in this item as LEA Governor at Carr Manor High School.)

98 Annual Standards Report - Secondary Schools

The Scrutiny Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 11th February 2011, which summarised progress in relation to secondary school improvement in Leeds and outlined challenges for further improvement.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following Executive Member and officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Mariana Pexton, Deputy Director of Children's Services
- Paul Brennan, Interim Director of School Improvement, Children's Services
- Christine Halsall, Head of Primary School Improvement and National Strategies, Children's Services
- Brian Tuffin, Head of Secondary School Improvement and National Strategies, Children's Services.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Concerns associated with children from complex and disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly attendance and attainment.
- The introduction of new national targets. It was agreed to provide Members with copies of the action plan submitted to the Secretary of State.
- Challenges associated with rising unemployment.
- Challenges in relation to local accountability of academies.
- Success of the Child Poverty Strategy citywide.
- Barriers to post 16 achievement, particularly withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). It was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information about numbers.
- Ensuring that young people were equipped with the necessary skills to enter employment.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

(Councillor P Latty left the meeting at 11.20 am at the conclusion of this item.)

99 Gypsy and Traveller Education

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report in relation to gypsy and traveller education arising from the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) inquiry report in January 2011.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the relevant extract from the Scrutiny Board's inquiry report and a briefing paper on the national and local position of gypsy and traveller girls' school attendance and educational achievements at 11 years and above.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Sameena Choudry, Head of Ethnic Minority Achievement
- Claire Lockwood, Assistant Travellers Education Manager.

The Scrutiny Board discussed the need to develop smaller, less isolated, local sites. Members briefly discussed some of the challenges associated with integrating gypsy and roma groups into the community and encouraging them to access education. It was noted that more progress had been made with primary age children.

RESOLVED – That the information provided be noted. That the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) be informed that in future this Board intends to specifically monitor the progress of gypsy and traveller girls as part of its annual reports on education standards.

100 Formal Response to Scrutiny Recommendations - Outdoor Education Centres

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the formal response to the Board's recommendations arising from its inquiry on Outdoor Education Centres.

John Paxton, Head of Integrated Youth Support Service, attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

Members were updated on progress at Herd Farm and Lineham Farm. It was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with a further update as part of the quarterly recommendation tracking report.

The Scrutiny Board agreed the status of recommendations as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – monitor again in 3 months
- Recommendation 2 – monitor again in 3 months
- Recommendation 3 – monitor again in 3 months
- Recommendation 4 – monitor again in 6 months
- Recommendation 5 – sign off
- Recommendation 6 – sign off

- Recommendation 7 – monitor again in 3 months.

RESOLVED – That progress continues to be monitored in the quarterly recommendation tracking report.

101 Fostering Inspection Action Plan and update on foster carer recruitment

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the Fostering Inspection Action Plan and an update on foster carer recruitment.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Sarah Johal, Service Delivery Manager – Fostering, Adoption and Family Placement, to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments.

The Chair briefly discussed the budgetary challenge of external placement costs. It was suggested that the Board considered this area of work as a potential inquiry topic in 2011/12.

The Scrutiny Board was advised that a major recruitment campaign for foster carers in Leeds was underway.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted, and that no further Scrutiny Board monitoring of the Inspection Action Plan was required.

102 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report - School Balances

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions arising from the Scrutiny Board's work on school balances.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board's final report and recommendations be approved; and
- (b) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports.

103 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to consider the response on the recommendation from the Meadowfield Primary School inquiry report in relation to the third stage review of complaints from schools.

RESOLVED – That no further action is required by the Scrutiny Board in relation to the recommendation on third stage review of complaints.

104 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the remainder of the current municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, the minutes from the Executive Board meetings held on 9th March and 30th March 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st April to 31st July 2011.

The Scrutiny Board agreed to receive a report back on the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and associated action plans at the May meeting.

RESOLVED – That the work programme, as amended, be approved.

105 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 19th May 2011 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 11.51 am.)