

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, B Flynn, A Forsaith,
C Gruen, P Gruen, C Howley, A Hussain,
J Illingworth, W Kidger, J Lennox, D Ragan,
K Renshaw and R. Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs K Blacker – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Mrs H Bellamy – Teacher Representative
Mrs A Kearsley – Early Years Representative
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children/Care Leavers Representative

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

1 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

1 Late Items

There were no late items.

1 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

1 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Drinkwater and A Marshall-Katung.

Councillors P Gruen and D Ragan were in attendance as substitutes.

1 Minutes - 3rd July 2019

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Wednesday, 23rd October, 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

1 Post 16 Meadows Park Partnership

The report of the Head of Democratic Services referred to the Chair's request for the Director of Children and Families to give the Board a briefing on the Council's understanding and position in relation to a decision to cease the Post 16 Meadows Park partnership arrangement made between the North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) and Benton Park High School.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite – Head of Learning Inclusion
- Victoria Coyle – Statutory Assessment and Provision Lead

The Board was initially briefed by the Statutory Assessment and Provision Lead officer who explained that the North West SILC has informal partnerships with four mainstream schools to enable their pupils to enjoy mainstream opportunities. However, it was also stressed that such pupils still remained on the roll of the North West SILC and therefore were considered as guests within the mainstream school settings.

It was reported that the current Meadows Park partnership is housed in 3 classrooms within Benton Park High School, with each class having pupils from one key stage in it. It was also reported that the decision to cease the Key Stage 5 (post-16) partnership arrangement had primarily been made due to general capacity demands at Benton Park High School as well as factoring in the overall value and future viability of the Post 16 provision compared to the increasing demand needs of those pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

In implementing this decision, it was also highlighted that a phased approach was being adopted to enable the majority of current post-16 students to complete their three years at Benton Park. However, as there would only be three Year 14 students remaining by September 2020, this was not considered to be a viable group. As such, it was reported that the SILC is currently working with these relevant students and their families to find alternative post-16 provision for them.

The Chair addressed the meeting to highlight that whilst the agenda report indicated that consultation had been carried out, it had been brought to his attention that no consultation had been undertaken with families prior to the decision being made. It was, however, noted within the appended letter to the report that engagement opportunities had subsequently been made by the SILC to discuss the implications of the decision with affected families.

During the Board's discussion, the following key points were made:

- *Responsibility for the students' learning pathway* - It was highlighted that the SILC maintained overall responsibility for their own students in terms of their learning pathways.
- *The implementation of the decision* – The Board was reminded that informal partnership arrangements made between schools fall outside of the Council's statutory decision making processes. However, it was the view of the Children and Families directorate that the phased implementation of the decision offered current families a reasonable period of time to consider alternative destinations and pathways.
- *The broader Leeds offer to post-16 students with SEND* - the Board sought clarification of the alternative options open to post-16 students with SEND and particularly within the context of promoting inclusive learning.
- *The widening of learning gaps during Key Stage 5* – Linked to the decision, reference was made to the learning gap between pupils with SEND and their mainstream peers widening as their enter sixth form education. The Board sought further clarity in terms of the evidence supporting this statement.
- *Communication with students and families* – The Board emphasised the importance of ensuring that the students and their families feel fully supported in making informed and appropriate choices regarding their learning pathways and recognised the important role of the Council in this respect too.
- *Undertaking further scrutiny work* – The Chair explained that the Scrutiny Board's function is not to act as a formal complaints process linked to decisions made by individual schools. However, it was agreed that the Board would undertake further scrutiny to better understand the circumstances and rationale associated with the decision to cease the Post 16 Meadows Park Partnership arrangement within the broader context of reviewing the city's Post 16 offer for individuals with SEND.

RESOLVED – That further scrutiny is undertaken to better understand the circumstances and rationale associated with the decision to cease the Post 16 Meadows Park Partnership arrangement within the broader context of reviewing the city's Post 16 offer for individuals with SEND.

1 Aspire, Empower, Accomplish - Supporting Young People with SEND in Leeds - Tracking of scrutiny recommendations

The report of the Head of Democratic Services and Director of Children and Families set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Inquiry into Aspire, Empower, Accomplish – Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Leeds.

The following were in attendance for this item –

- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite – Head of Learning Inclusion

- Victoria Coyle – Statutory Assessment and Provision Lead

At the start of this agenda item, Councillor Gruen introduced Ben Carradice from the Learning Disabilities Partnership and explained that Ben was work shadowing her that day. Ben was also accompanied by his support worker. The Board welcomed them both to the meeting.

In consideration of the report, the status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – Not fully implemented (progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 3 - Not fully implemented (progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 5 – Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- Recommendation 9 – Achieved
- Recommendation 11 - Not fully implemented (progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

The following key points were raised during consideration of this item:

- Recommendation 1 – There was a challenge with the significant rise in demand for assessments which has impacted on completing annual reviews. To respond to this, it was noted that there had been a recruitment process, with new staff in SENSAP expected to start in September 2019.
- Recommendation 3 – Particular reference was made to the proactive work being undertaken with the Voice and Influence Team around parental engagement and also a forthcoming peer review aimed at sharing best practice with other authorities and schools.
- Recommendation 5 – It was noted that an accurate analysis of attainment would be limited due to the small size of the cohort in question. Whilst this was seen as an obstacle, it was suggested that the Principal Scrutiny Adviser and the Chair discusses this further with the directorate to establish how best to address this issue in future.
- Recommendation 9 – The Board noted the continued good work linked to the delivery of the Preparation for Adulthood strategy, including plans to hold further workshops around transitions.
- Recommendation 11 – Acknowledging the links with the earlier agenda item, the Board felt that further work was still needed to review and provide further opportunities and choices for Post-16 individuals with SEND.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (2) That the above status of tracking recommendations be approved.

Councillor Hussain arrived at the meeting at 11:00 am during discussion of this item.

1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman report on the provision of suitable education for a child absent from school due to anxiety

The report of the Director of Children and Families informed the Board of the outcomes of a recent Ombudsman report and also provided assurances that the Council had taken effective action in response.

A copy of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report regarding the investigation was appended to the report.

The following were in attendance for this item –

- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite – Head of Learning Inclusion

It was reported that it had been a complex case and following close work with the family involved, there had been a positive resolution and the young person concerned was back in school.

The Chair suggested that further scrutiny is undertaken to enable Board Members to fully consider the specific circumstances surrounding this case as well as the wider implications to the Council. It was proposed that this work be undertaken via a working group meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted
- (2) That a working group meeting be scheduled to enable Board Members to fully consider the specific circumstances surrounding the Ombudsman case as well as the wider implications to the Council.

Co-opted Member Andrew Graham and Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.40 am and 11:50 am respectively following the discussion of this item.

1 The 3As Strategy: Improving the attendance, attainment and achievement of children & young people in Leeds

The report of the Director Children and Families sought the views of the Scrutiny Board on the development of the 3As Strategy.

A copy of the Leeds 3As Strategy: Attend, Attain and Achieve was appended to the report.

Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning, presented the report and explained the rationale and aims of the key obsessions and priorities set out within the strategy.

It was highlighted that the strategy has had input from a range of staff and stakeholders, including children and young people. It was also noted that the strategy had been considered by the Executive Board at its meeting in July 2019. In response, the Chair stated that the preference of the Scrutiny Board is to help inform the development of a strategy at an earlier stage.

In consideration of the strategy, the following key points were raised:

- Improving early years and pre-school education – there was a desire to increase the number of two year olds taking up their funded places in the city.
- Issuing surrounding off-rolling and the use of internal isolation to control bad behaviour. It was noted that these matters would be picked up by the Board in more detail during its October meeting.
- The importance of positive transition from primary to secondary education.
- The importance of encouraging children to read.
- Support for children with English as a second language.
- Concern regarding levels of attainment in Wards with higher levels of deprivation and the need to achieve consistency across the city.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That quarterly updates on the 3As strategy are planned into the Scrutiny Board's work schedule.

Councillor Ragan left the meeting at 12.00 pm following the discussion of this item.

1 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's Work Schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser reflected on the Board's discussions during the meeting and agreed to liaise with the Chair to update the work schedule accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the draft work schedule be noted and updated to reflect the Board's discussions during the meeting.

1 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 23 October 2019 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 a.m.)

