

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 4TH MARCH, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, J Dowson,
P Drinkwater, B Flynn, A Forsaith,
C Gruen, C Howley, J Illingworth,
A Marshall-Katung, 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 H Bellamy – Teacher Representative

83 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

84 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

85 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

86 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

87 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors A Hussain, W Kidger and J Lennox.
Councillor J Dowson attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor
Hussain.

Apologies were also received from Co-opted Members C Foote, E Holmes
and D Reilly.

88 Minutes - 5th February 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 5th February 2020, be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Minute 80 – Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling. Reference was made to the Board's earlier request for additional detail surrounding the number of pupils being placed in alternative provision via the Area Inclusion Partnerships. While it was agreed that this would be made available to Board Members in time for its next meeting, Members also acknowledged the need to consider such sensitive information appropriately.

89 Scrutiny Inquiry into Children's Centres - recommendation tracking update

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 earlier Scrutiny Inquiry into Children's Centres.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Service for Learning for Life

In consideration of the report, the status of each recommendation was agreed as follows:

Recommendation 1 – Achieved

Recommendation 2 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

Recommendation 3 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

Recommendation 4 – Achieved

Recommendation 5 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

Recommendation 6 – Achieved

Recommendation 7 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

Recommendation 8 – Achieved

Recommendation 9 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

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

- Recommendation 1 – whilst the Board agreed to close out this recommendation, Members had highlighted the potential benefits of

having Early Years representation on Children Centre Advisory Boards too. It was agreed that this would therefore be looked at.

- Recommendation 2 – whilst acknowledging the challenge with the way each GP Surgery operates independently, the Board noted the communication benefits of having specific health visitors and midwifery contacts for every surgery. Moving forward, it was acknowledged that there would be ongoing discussions with the Council’s new Director of Public Health in terms of the future direction of travel.
- Recommendation 4 – Whilst welcoming the increase in enquiries and engagement through the use of digital channels, Members were assured that posters and leaflets were still being used too. The Board was informed that mechanisms are in place to continue monitoring usage and that work was also being undertaken to review the capacity needs for each centre to facilitate their own web-site.
- Recommendation 5 – The Board discussed the processes in place for assessing language development in early year children and also acknowledged that the 3 As Strategy has driven a clear focus on early language and literacy in the early years too.
- Recommendation 8 – in response to a query regarding the sustainability of Children Centre buildings and maintenance, the Head of Service for Learning for Life reported that there had been strong proactive focus over the last 18 months by Childrens Service Asset Management to improve children’s centre buildings. Linked to this, it was also noted that 20 centres are currently managed and governed by schools.
- Recommendation 9 – Linked to future tracking reports, the Board agreed to maintain a watching briefing regarding the financial sustainability of Children’s Centres.

The Chair requested that a further tracking report be brought back to the Board during October/November 2020 and thanked the officers in attendance for their contributions.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report be noted;
- b) That the status of recommendations as set out above, be agreed;
- c) That a further tracking report be brought back to the Scrutiny Board during October/November 2020.

90 Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-Rolling - Session Two

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented key information linked to the second session of the Scrutiny Board’s Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling.

The following information had been appended to the report:

- Training and support from Leeds City Council (Appendix 1)

- Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England. Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion. Department for Education (Appendix 2)
- Report of the Children's Commissioner. Exclusions. Children excluded from mainstream schools – May 2019 (Appendix 3)

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning

In introducing this report, the Chair highlighted the importance of undertaking a thorough inquiry into this matter. It was therefore acknowledged that further evidence gathering would likely continue into the new municipal year for the successor Scrutiny Board to conclude.

The Chair explained that a number of representatives of the Scrutiny Board had taken part in focus group discussions with the Leeds Youth Council on Saturday 15th February 2020 and invited those particular Board Members to relay their feedback to the Board.

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

- It was noted that while many of the young people who took part in the focus groups had not necessarily experienced being formally excluded, they still had particular strong views surrounding the use of internal exclusions and isolations.
- There was consensus amongst the young people that schools needed to have appropriate enforcement measures to deal with disruptive pupil behaviour. However, many felt that the use of internal exclusion was not being applied appropriately and would often be used as a sanction for minor offences, such as forgetting planners or not correctly adhering to the school's uniform code. Consequently those pupils would then miss their daily lessons.
- The young people felt that more teachers would benefit from having mental health training to help them identify and deal more effectively with issues affecting pupils' behaviour.
- The Board also discussed the need to strengthen teacher training programmes in terms of having a greater emphasis around child development and how biological factors, such as puberty, can particularly affect behaviours.
- Linked to this, the Board also emphasised the importance of schools taking a more holistic approach towards tackling behavioural issues to help identify any potential underlying issues, such as having a troubled home life; being a young carer; or having underlying health conditions.
- The Board felt that schools should be reviewing their approach when repeated sanctions are being applied to particular pupils with no remedial affect.

- The Board was informed that further work was being undertaken with the Council's Voice and Influence Team to support the Children and Families Learning Inclusions with capturing the voice of excluded young people more effectively.
- The Board also expressed an interest to hear directly from young people who had experienced exclusion. Linked to this, the Chair informed the Board that he had been approached by the Principal of Leeds City College to facilitate a visit to the 14-16 Academy at Leeds City College for Members of the Scrutiny Board to speak with students regarding their experience of mainstream school. In welcoming this offer, it was noted that a date for this visit would be confirmed in due course.

Linked to this second session of the Inquiry, the Chair explained that particular focus was around the role of School Governors and the support and training made available to them. The Chair therefore invited those Board Members with Governor responsibilities to share their own personal experiences regarding the provision of training received, their role in monitoring school exclusions and challenging head teachers on their strategies for reducing exclusions.

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

- There was variable experiences shared by those Board Members with Governing responsibilities in terms of the level of training provided and their involvement in Exclusion Panel meetings.
- Members highlighted the importance of receiving consistent information and training across all schools in terms of exclusions.
- It was noted that while the guidance set out in the DfE document was helpful to Governors, it was also legally technical. As such, the Board felt that appropriate training surrounding this guidance should be applied to Governors in preparation of them being asked to take part in any Exclusion Panel meetings.
- Members were informed that the next planned training session on behaviour and graduated approach to behaviour will be run by a Senior Educational Psychologist on 31st March 2020, and that the next training session around exclusion processes, which is offered once a year, is scheduled for 29th April 2020.
- The Deputy Director for Learning explained that although there is no formal mechanism for reporting internal exclusions, governors are encouraged to request this information in order to monitor trends in detentions and exclusions, as well as providing effective challenge where there are particular repeated incidents.
- It was felt that Governors should also be empowered and supported to challenge schools in terms of the information its provides to parents and carers regarding their rights surrounding fixed and permanent exclusions, and the advocacy and support that is in place for them to access.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report, and discussions be noted;
- b) That a visit to the Leeds City College 14-16 Academy be arranged for Board Members in the coming months.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11:55 am, Councillor Flynn at 12:00 pm, and Councillors Drinkwater and C Gruen at 12:10 pm during discussion of this item)

(Councillor Dowson and Co-opted Member A Graham left the meeting at 12:25 pm, during discussion of this item)

91 Work Schedule

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

The work schedule for 2019/20 municipal year, was appended to the report.

Members discussed items on the work schedule with particular reference made to the following meetings and events:

- While it was noted that the working group meeting regarding the Ombudsman report had been scheduled for Monday 16th March 2020, it was acknowledged that the recent announcement made by Ofsted regarding a Joint Targeted Area Inspection during w/c 16th March 2020 may impact on the directorate's capacity to facilitate this meeting.
- It was noted that up to 6 representatives of the Scrutiny Board had been invited to attend the Post-16 SEND education OBA event on 19th March 2020 at 9.30 am.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be noted

92 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 1st April 2020 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 a.m.)

The meeting ended at 12:45 pm