

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, N Dawson, J Dowson,
P Drinkwater, A Forsaith, C Howley,
W Kidger, P Latty, J Lennox, A Marshall-
Katung, K Ritchie, R. Stephenson and
P Wray

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
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
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children / Care Leavers Representative

74 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

75 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

76 Late Items

There were no formal late items, however the draft minutes of the meeting on 22nd January 2020 were circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

77 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

78 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors C Gruen, J Illingworth, K Renshaw, A Hussain and B Flynn. Councillors J Dowson, N Dawson, P Wray, K Ritchie and P Latty were in attendance at the meeting as substitutes.

Apologies were also received from Co-opted Members Andrew Graham and Emma Holmes.

79 Minutes - 22nd January 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

80 Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling - Session One

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

The following was appended to the report:

- Scrutiny Inquiry Terms of Reference
- Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling report submitted 23 October 2019
- Children's Commissioner report 'Skipping School: Invisible Children' published February 2019
- Children's Commissioner report 'Exclusions' May 2019
- Timpson Review of School Exclusion May 2019

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite, Head of Learning Inclusion

The Deputy Director for Learning introduced the report, highlighting the following:

- *Permanent and fixed-term exclusions.* Although the number of permanent exclusions in Leeds have decreased in recent years, the number of fixed term exclusions have increased. Members were advised that a restorative approach is encouraged to all schools, with a reduced focus on exclusions, however approaches and ethos vary across schools.
- *Internal exclusions.* Members were also informed that the prevalence of internal exclusions within each school, also referred to as 'isolation', is not measured as schools are not obliged to provide this data to the local authority.
- *Elective Home Education and off-rolling.* Members were advised that although it was important to recognise that often families make positive and informed decisions to home educate their children, there had been a significant increase in families choosing to home educate children

with SEND and for those in the final years of secondary school. There is also growing concern that this trend may be a result of schools off-rolling pupils to benefit the school, by encouraging families to home educate their child and avoid the prospect of permanent exclusion.

- *Area Inclusion Partnerships.* Members were advised that despite the local authority's reduced control over schools, Area Inclusion Partnerships aim to prevent exclusions and promote inclusion, by ensuring that a multi-agency panel supports children at risk of exclusion, and therefore avoid any of the measures above to be taken.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Statutory guidance for exclusions.* Members queried the disparity between school approaches in relation to exclusions, despite the statutory guidance provided by central government. Members were advised that the statutory guidance still allows for interpretation, which reduces the consistency across schools.
- *The child's right to education* - It was noted that the introduction of the 3 A's strategy aimed to further promote a child's right to education and to also adopt a whole systems approach in terms of improving the outcomes of particularly vulnerable groups. Linked to this, reference was made to the role of early help and the importance of supporting them in challenging schools around exclusions and also working with schools to explore other appropriate solutions.
- *Children looked after.* In recognising that often the most vulnerable children and young people are at a higher risk of exclusion, Members sought assurance that particular efforts are made to ensure that children looked after are not subject to off-rolling. Members were advised that it is the responsibility of the Head of the Virtual School for children looked after to closely monitor the learning pathways and outcomes for all children looked after, and that Elective Home Education is only ever used as a temporary measure in exceptional circumstances.
- *Exits from mainstream education.* The Board was informed the local authority must be informed when a young person is taken off roll of a school. Where a pupil has been moved to an alternative provision, it was highlighted that Ofsted has made it clear that the pupil is to stay on the roll of the mainstream school while receiving any alternative education provision.
- *Home visits for Elective Home Education pupils.* Members expressed concern about the lack of accountability home educators have in relation to the quality of their provision, and were advised that although currently home visits can be declined, officers were supportive of the Children's Commissioners campaign for a national register to track providers and the introduction of statutory home visits.
- *Tracking the outcomes and Post-16 destinations of Elective Home Education pupils.* While acknowledging the difficulty of tracking this particular cohort, the Board felt it would be valuable to explore ways in which to capture the education outcomes and Post-16 destinations of these pupils too.

- *Taking account of parental views and perspectives.* The Board acknowledged that parental views and perspectives surrounding the behaviour management policies and practices of schools could be quite diverse, but felt it would still be helpful to try and capture the voice of parents/carers.

Councillor C Howley arrived at 11:30 a.m. during discussion of this item.

Helen Bellamy left the meeting at 12.00 pm during discussion of this item.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and the issues raised during this first inquiry session be noted.

81 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.

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

82 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 4th March 2020 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 am)