

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 23RD OCTOBER, 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, N Dawson,
P Drinkwater, B Flynn, A Forsaith,
C Gruen, A Hussain, J Illingworth,
W Kidger, J Lennox and R. Stephenson

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
Mrs A Kearsley – Early Years Representative
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children / Care Leavers Representative

38 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

39 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

40 Late Items

There were no formal late items. However there was supplementary information in relation to Agenda Item 7 – Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling, this was tabled at the meeting with the agreement of all Board Members.

41 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

42 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Howley and Renshaw.

Cllr. Dawson attended the meeting as substitute for Cllr. Renshaw. Cllr. Bentley had been due to substitute for Cllr. Howley, however, Cllr. Bentley tendered his apologies as he had been called away to another meeting.

Mr Andrew Graham, Church Representative (Church of England) also sent his apologies.

43 Minutes - 25th September 2019

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 27th November, 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2019, be approved as a correct record.

44 Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided the latest position in Leeds regarding Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling. This information had been presented to Executive Board in September. Further to a recent article by 'Tes' linked to a leaked internal report from the GORSE Academy Trust, this was circulated to Board Members for information with the agreement of the Chair. Board Members were of the view that this information should be considered as part of this agenda item.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment;
- Councillor Salma Arif – Deputy Executive Member;
- Steve Walker – Director of Children and Families;
- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning.
- Steve Walker – Director of Children and Families;
- Sue Rumbold – Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health.

Members were informed of the following points:

- The information contained within the submitted report had been presented at Executive Board during its meeting on 18th September;
- It was noted that the Council had previously approached the GORSE Academy Trust (February 2019) in relation to practices which now appear to be referenced in the leaked internal report from the GORSE Academy Trust, dated November 2016, in terms of the Trust's Progress 8 Modelling. These concerns had also been shared with the Regional Schools Commissioner;
- It had been noted that there had been an increase in the numbers of parents choosing to Elective Home Educate. Whilst acknowledging that this can be a positive choice for some families, there were concerns that in some cases parents were feeling pressured by schools to home educate their children in order to avoid them having a permanent exclusion on their personal record;
- Leeds City Council supports the Area Inclusion Partnerships and recognises the importance of pupils remaining in school.
- There have been no reductions to fixed term exclusions and concerns had been raised that the length of fixed term exclusions was becoming longer;
- Particular concern had been raised in relation to pupils that had been removed prior to examinations in year 11. This practice was not deemed to be in the interest of the child and more likely to be linked to a schools performance outcome;
- The legalities surrounding exclusions and elective home education were provided to the Board. Members also received clarification on parental approval and managed moves;

Board Members discussions included:

- The benefits of alternative provision for those pupils who are struggling within a mainstream school, which can either be a temporary intervention or a longer term solution;
- The role of the Council to challenge data and address any concerns including advising the Secretary of State or Ofsted of the concerns;
- The importance of positive discipline;
- Enriched curriculum to encourage good behaviour;
- The need for good communication between the Council and all schools including academies and to engage with the Area Inclusion Partnerships;
- Consistency in approach of exclusions with training and support provided to head teachers, teachers and governors;
- Support and advice to be provided to parents on behaviour policy and exclusions.

The Board proposed undertaking further scrutiny into this issue and requested that draft terms of reference for an inquiry be brought back to the Board's next meeting for consideration.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling be brought to the Board's next meeting for consideration.

45 The Impact of Child Poverty on Achievement, Attainment and Attendance – Tracking of Scrutiny Recommendations

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's earlier inquiry into the Impact of Child Poverty on Achievement, Attainment and Attendance.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Learning, skills and Employment;
- Councillor Salma Arif – Deputy Executive Member;
- Sue Rumbold – Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health;
- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning;
- Amelia Gunn – Projects Officer, Children and Families

In relation to the recommendations as set out at appendix 2 the following position status categories were assigned by the Board:

Recommendation 1 – Achieved

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 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

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

Recommendation 8 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

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

Recommendation 10 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

Recommendation 11 – Achieved

Recommendation 12 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

Recommendation 13 - Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

Recommendation 14 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

Recommendation 15 – Not fully implemented. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring

RESOLVED –To note the content of the report and agree the position status of the recommendations as set out above.

46 Thriving: A Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

The report of the Director of Children and Families invited the Scrutiny Board to consider and comment on the ‘Thriving: A Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds’ document as well as setting out some of the work that has taken place over the last 18 months to mitigate the impact of child poverty in Leeds.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment;
- Councillor Salma Arif – Deputy Executive Member;
- Sue Rumbold – Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health;
- Phil Mellen – Deputy Director for Learning;
- Amelia Gunn – Projects Officer, Children and Families.

Members of the Board were informed of the following key points:

- That the Child Poverty Strategy is to be considered for approval by the Executive Board in November.
- The population of children in the city is continuing to grow at a fast pace with a number of these children living in poverty;

- Leeds City Council, the University of Leeds, Child Poverty Action Group and CATCH worked in partnership with young people and parents who live on low incomes to discuss the day to day impact of poverty on their lives. The information from this collaborative working has produced a report 'More Snakes than Ladders' which was appended to the report;
- Free sanitary products are now available for all schools to request. The products will be available in bespoke packaging from January. Sanitary products will also be available at the Community Hubs so that they can be accessed during school holidays;
- An 'App' will be launched in the New Year which will provide support and guidance in relation to periods.
- That that Council continues to work proactively towards raising standards within the private rented sector, with particular reference made to the new Selective Licensing Scheme.

Reflecting on the work undertaken by Scrutiny in relation to its earlier Inquiry into Child Poverty, the Board welcomed the new Child Poverty Strategy and agreed to continue monitoring the delivery of this Strategy.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That an update surrounding the delivery of the new Child Poverty Strategy be brought back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board at the same time as tracking the recommendations arising from the Board's earlier Child Poverty Inquiry.

47 Work Schedule

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the report of the Head of Democratic Services to consider the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

The work schedule was appended to the report.

Further to the Board's discussion last month regarding the Post 16 Meadows Park Partnership, it was agreed that this matter would be explored within the broader context of the city's Post 16 education provision and therefore be linked to the forthcoming Outcome Based Accountability work being undertaken by the directorate, which is expected to be completed by the Spring.

The Board agreed to receive an overview of the Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People Mental Health and Wellbeing at its November meeting. This is to assist the Board in determining what areas it may wish to undertake further scrutiny.

RESOLVED – To note the content of the report and update the work schedule to reflect the Board's discussion during the meeting.

48 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board will be on 27th November 2019 at 10:00am with a pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9:45am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm)