

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Inquiry into education standards – entering the education system

Terms of reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 During the 2007/08 municipal year, the Children's Services Scrutiny Board carried out an inquiry into education standards, and specifically the current support provided for young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- 1.2 This inquiry developed out of the board's desire to look at education standards overall. However, a working group which was established in September 2007 to consider the issue concluded that in order to be effective, the board would need to focus their investigation on a specific area, and young people at risk of becoming NEET were identified as the immediate priority.
- 1.3 When the decision to focus on the this group was taken, members made it clear that they felt that early years and primary transition was another area in which a specific piece of work on education standards would be of value. As a result, they made a strong recommendation that this year's board carry out an inquiry on this topic.
- 1.4 The 2008/09 Children's Services Scrutiny Board agreed to take up this recommendation, and to carry out a further inquiry. This inquiry will tie in to priorities around early intervention and family support in the Leeds Strategic Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan, along with Local Area Agreement targets, and the board's role in monitoring performance.
- 1.5 In order to decide on an appropriate and manageable focus for the inquiry, the board commissioned a small working group from amongst its membership to scope the inquiry. The working group met with officers from Early Years and Education Leeds on 27th August 2008.
- 1.6 The working group were concerned to identify areas where the Scrutiny Board's input could add value to work already underway to improve education standards in Leeds, having regard to the proposed timescale for the inquiry.
- 1.7 The group identified two main areas of focus for the inquiry – namely the different methods used to assess education standards during early years, foundation and Key Stage 1 (KS1), and the way in which the information gathered is used by childcare and education providers, and shared between the many different organisations involved. This should enable the board to ascertain how continuity is maintained between the

pre-school and school environments, and how children and families requiring additional support are identified and assisted, with the overall aim of establishing how the best outcomes can be achieved for all children in this age group.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on current methods of measuring attainment and standards for children aged 0-7, and whether the information gathered is being used effectively to improve outcomes. The inquiry will focus on the following areas:

- How information on attainment is collected by childcare providers, and in particular what impact the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will have on this
- How this information is shared with primary schools
- How attainment is measured within primary schools, both on entry to foundation stage and at KS1
- More broadly, how the transition between pre-school provision and primary provision is managed
- How children at risk of under-achievement are identified at an early stage, and how information relating to them is shared between the different services involved
- How information about the needs of all children aged 0-7 and their families is collected and used by other services

3.0 Comments of the relevant director and executive member

3.1 Comments received have been reflected in the terms of reference.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

4.1 The inquiry will take place between December 2008 and March 2009, with a view to issuing a final report in summer 2009.

4.2 It is envisaged that the inquiry will take place over three sessions. The inquiry will conclude with the publication of a formal report setting out the board's conclusions and recommendations.

4.3 It is planned that the inquiry will include a range of visits to service providers to complement the evidence gathered in formal sessions.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 The following evidence will be considered by the Board

5.2 **Session One – 11th December 2008**

To consider background information from Education Leeds and Early Years on the national and local policy context in terms of measuring attainment for the 0-7 age group, and to examine the different methods used. In particular:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage. What this consists of, and the impact which its introduction will have on services in Leeds.
- Pilot Leeds Transition Document
- Assessment at the end of the Foundation Stage
- Assessment at KS1
- The way in which the data from each of these assessments is used by, and shared between, schools and other providers to improve outcomes

5.3 **Visits**

A number of visits will be organised to enable the Board to meet with relevant service providers. Exact locations to be confirmed.

5.4 **Session Two – 5th March 2009**

To consider background information from Education Leeds and Early Years on the way in which the transition from informal, non-statutory provision to formal, statutory education is managed, with focus on the following areas:

- How children at risk of underachievement are identified
- How they and their families are assisted at each stage of childcare and education up to the age of 6 (and beyond)
- How primary schools work with the huge variety of providers of pre-school care and education
- How the transition between pre-school provision and primary provision is managed to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for all children

5.5 **Session Three – 5th March 2009**

To consider any outstanding issues arising from session one

To consider members' findings from the visits and to discuss issues arising from the visits with officers

To consider the board's emerging conclusions and recommendations to inform the production of the final inquiry report

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

- Education Leeds staff
- Early Years staff
- School representatives
- Representatives of different varieties of pre-school provision
- Providers of relevant support services including council services, other statutory providers and voluntary agencies
- Parents

7.0 Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 Following the completion of the scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

8.0 Measures of success

8.1 It is important to consider how the Board will deem whether its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

8.2 The Board will look to publish practical recommendations.