

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 6th May, 2014 at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2 at the
Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Marrey (Chair)
Councillor Boleyn (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Bills, Casey, Hill, Islam, Perks, Vickers and Mrs Walker, Mr Nesbitt,
Reverend Wickens, Mr Ridley, Ms Sinden and Mrs Verdegem.

Also in attendance:

Councillor Crumpton (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning).

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Housing Management) – Lead Officer to the Committee, Interim Director of Children's Services, Ms T Brittain and Mr H Powell, Interim Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Education Services) and Ms J Broadmeadow, Divisional Lead, Safeguarding (all Directorate of Children's Services) and Mrs K Buckle (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

35 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Arshad and Mrs Simms, Mr Lynch, Mr Taylor and Mrs Ward.

36 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

37 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th April, 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

No issues were raised under this item.

STANDARDS REPORT – PERFORMANCE DATA

The Committee received a report of the Interim Director of Children’s Services on the validated data available concerning the performance of schools in the Borough. The Interim Director of Children’s Services and the Assistant Directors (Education Services) gave a detailed presentation on the statistical information in the report and provided updates and responses to individual points raised by the Committee.

In relation to questions raised regarding Specialist Early Years provision it was acknowledged that the number of early years with specialist educational needs were rising and the Specialist Early Years Team had been commissioned to conduct a review on specialist provision to include increasing the provision, the number of places and funding available whilst identifying how the present capacity could be built upon.

Regarding the increase in settings for achievement of grade 3, the School Improvement Early Years Team support for schools and settings provide for those schools where improvement was required ensuring that the level of support required was provided at a reduced cost.

The position in relation to the significant changes to Special Educational Needs funding was recognised and it was noted that the Schools Forum had agreed to a significant increase in funding in Special Schools in the Dudley Borough.

In relation to suggestions made and questions raised regarding the Pupil Premium it was noted that the Securing Good Group ensured that suggestions and information sharing took place between schools and the position in relation to special educational needs and free schools meals was also being examined and work was being undertaken in relation to this by the Group.

That Pupil Premiums could be used in a variety of ways to provide differing levels of support including additional educational curriculum support. This could involve support with school attendance.

The position in relation to Centres for Development of maths was outlined where whole schools were enabled to share support and there were various support mechanisms in place including secondary school students supporting younger students in relation to mathematics and the former Ofsted national lead in mathematics now working in secondary schools and a further Ofsted Inspector conducting work in a further two schools in the Dudley Borough.

In responding to concerns raised in relation to Ofsted and pupils attitudes to schools including their emotional wellbeing and achievements, Officers referred to the data that was analysed, providing headlines and the school improvement meetings that consider the emotional and wellbeing of children and the range of work undertaken in schools to address the emotional and wellbeing of pupils.

Concerns in relation to Ofsted were noted and Officers assured Members that should concerns arise in relation to Inspections these concerns had been and would be raised and this had resulted in appropriate action being taken in the past.

In relation to Key Stage 1, it was accepted that schools remained more focused on pupils in receipt of pupil premium at Key Stage 2 and there was a requirement to look at more early intervention as although the gap in improvement was reducing it remained wide and the funding available for early intervention would also be investigated.

Ms T Brittain, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services, Education Services undertook to provide a response to Councillor Islam in relation to the data contained on page two paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report submitted and whether this data related to those pupils receiving free school meals.

In relation to the Ethnicity Data an Officer reported that data was analysed in relation to those children who were underachieving in order to establish whether additional work was required and schools settings have tracking which ensured that individual pupils progress was tracked.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning congratulated schools and Officers for the work carried out. He referred to presentations to parents in relation to special needs.

He referred to the removal of statements of special educational needs together with details of the support that could be expected in the future from a main stream school and meetings that were to take place with partners in order for the establishment of a website providing parents with further information in relation to special educational needs.

Following a suggestion of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning the Chair proposed that this Committee scrutinise Special Needs provision at a future meeting and also suggested that the Committee may wish to scrutinise Pupil Premiums, whether good practice in relation to narrowing the gap for pupils eligible for pupil premium shared and whether Premiums used effectively and consistently.

The Chair also suggested various areas for scrutiny at future meetings of the Committee, including Special Educational Needs provision in the Dudley Borough and Loss of Statements of Special Educational Needs.

Members thanked the Early Years Team in Dudley and expressed their appreciation for the work of both teachers and support staff in schools within the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the improvement in educational standards made and Members comments, be noted.

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DUDLEY SCHOOLS OFSTED OUTCOMES

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Children's Services on Dudley Schools Ofsted outcomes in the period January 2013 to December 2013.

Concerns were expressed in relation to the quality of Ofsted reports and Inspections and the fact that inspections were data driven and outcomes were pre-judged. Officers responded stating that they were satisfied with responses received from Ofsted following official letters and meetings with representatives when concerns in relation to the standard of reports and inspections were raised and they were confident in relation to the outcomes of Inspections in three schools with discussions continuing in relation to two further schools.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning raised concerns in relation to problematic Academies and the package of support that would be put in place for those experiencing difficulties and Officers responded stating that discussions were continuing in relation this issue.

The Chair requested Officers to provide feedback to the Committee in relation to Ofsted on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments of the Committee be noted.

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SCRUTINY OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The Chair referred to a draft report that had been prepared in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking and the Vice-Chair provided a brief overview of the report, making particular reference to the recommendations contained in the report.

Arising from discussions in relation to the draft report and further possible recommendations, the Interim Director of Children's Services advised as follows:-

- that the next Chat Back project would be based around child sexual exploitation and developing a project to use in schools in order to provide mandatory training in relation to this.
- That issues in relation to information sharing in relation to suspected cases of child sexual exploitation would be considered by the Vulnerable Children's Task Group and a network of Child Protection Co-ordinators could focus on these.
- That schools could be encouraged to raise awareness in relation to child sexual exploitation but could not be forced to do so.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning was currently investigating the cost of all Dudley Borough schools viewing a trafficking production that he had recently attended.

Members made various suggestions in relation to promoting awareness in relation to child sexual exploitation including:-

Work with the wider community to include work with the Dudley Faith Network and Dudley Council Voluntary Services in order to gather information on how to work with wider communities and that work was required with organisations and young people.

The production of News letters and the distribution of these to libraries, schools and Doctors surgeries.

A Member referred to the work of the Council's Communications and Public Affairs section who were investigating initiatives to promote awareness in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Following further discussion the Chair requested Members to advise either himself or the Vice Chair of any further recommendations they had in relation to raising awareness of child sexual exploitation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Interim Director of Children's Services be requested to submit the draft report on Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking to the Council's Vulnerable Children's Task Group and the Safeguarding Board.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning be recommended to:-
 - (a) Ensure that arrangements are put in hand for mandatory training for all elected members on safeguarding and child exploitation training so as to raise awareness of the subject.

- (b) Continue liaison and awareness campaigns with hotel managers and staff to increase knowledge and improve recognition with all evidence from hotel rooms being retained.
 - (c) Develop closer links with Street Teams and invite them to present their Education Programme to all schools and colleges within the Dudley Borough.
 - (d) Encourage all schools in the Dudley Borough to engage in the ChildLine Schools Service.
 - (e) Retain records of Schools within the Borough who fail to engage in the ChildLine Schools Services.
 - (f) Encourage all Dudley Borough school staff to report any suspected incidents of child sexual exploitation confidentially to the Council.
 - (g) Encourage all Dudley Borough schools to engage with Saltmines and Chat Back.
 - (h) Investigate raising awareness with the wider community in relation to child sexual exploitation with Dudley Council Voluntary Services and Trade organisations.
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CLOSING REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

This being the last meeting of the Committee of the current municipal year, the Chair thanked Officers and Members of the Committee for their contributions during the year.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

CHAIR