

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
13 MARCH 2019

(7.15 pm - 9.30 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Sally Kenny (in the Chair), Councillor Edward Gretton, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Omar Bush, Councillor Edward Foley, Councillor Natasha Irons, Councillor Mark Kenny, Councillor Hayley Ormrod, Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Helen Forbes, Emma Lemon and Colin Powell

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Kelly Braund - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah - Cabinet Member for Education
Rachael Wardell - Director of Children School and Families,
Jane McSherry - Assistant Director of Education
Paul Angeli – Head of Social Care and Inclusion
Sharon Buckby – Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance
Elizabeth Fitzpatrick – Head of School Improvement
Keith Shipman – Social Inclusion Manager
Celia Dawson - , Head of Cricket Green School, and Co-Chair of the School Effectiveness Partnership
Lisa Jewell – Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

4 SCHOOL STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families introduced the School Standards Report and answered some points of clarification made by Members.

Celia Dawson, Head of Cricket Green School, and Chair of the School Effectiveness Partnership spoke to the Panel and gave an overview of the achievements and progress of pupils at Cricket Green School. She explained that special schools cannot be compared as each cohort will differ. Special Schools will consider the child as a whole, and work on achievements in social skills, communication skills and employment, with the aim of learning skills that will increase independence. Some children will be entered for accreditation and national initiatives such as functional skills in maths and English, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Arts subjects and employability training. Pupils at Cricket Green School have succeeded in obtaining qualifications that allow them to progress to College and/or employment.

The Panel thanked Celia Dawson and said that wonderful to hear about the success of the school.

The Head of School Improvement provided additional information in response to questions about the School Standards Report:

- We are aware that certain groups of children are making less progress, we do scrutinize this and bring schools together to improve outcomes.
- We challenge any under attainment and have ambition. Our Key Stage 1 Maths results are above the national average and have been rising in recent years. We have to ensure that progress is realistic and accurate, often where attainment is low children have still made great progress.
- If a School receives a 'Requires Improvement' from OFSTED then a Support and Challenge group of Officers will meet with the School to look at teaching and learning progress. The School will receive a high level of support between meetings according to the areas of need
- We do not have a high level of involvement with Academy Schools. Benedict School does access some support and some of their results are improving.
- We seek to maximize outcomes for Early Years, but children do start Early Years at very different levels, and we must be mindful of SEMH issues
- Whilst children growing up in poverty are less likely to get good results this gap is narrowing. Pupil Premium numbers are published, and school can run initiatives to support such students
- Early Years Children are all starting from different levels. Key Stage 1&2 writing was an area of concern in the past but has now significantly improved. There is a national Moderator in the Merton team, this is not necessarily replicated in other Local Authorities.
- Key Stage 4; past figures cannot be compared because of changes in GSCE marking. Our recent figures are above London Averages.
- A level results are highlighted in the Executive Summary. We are working with schools and have a robust plan to improve in place, including skilling up teachers.

- Our Key Stage 2 Reading is 8th in the country and maths is 6th in progress, with strong progress comes rise in attainment.
- Will provide figures for post 16s who don't pass Maths and English

The Head of Inclusion provided additional information in response to questions about the School Standards Report:

- Persistent Absenteeism, defined as 10% or more, is mainly the result of illness, and children need the appropriate support for their illness. We have a low level in Merton. SEN and MH issues can increase absence rates.
- We can use legal powers, starting with penalty warning letters to parents if necessary.
- We do prosecute and fine for taking children out of school to go on Holiday
- Will provide figures and revenue figures for these fines.
- We can refer to the Children Missing Education Panel, this works across agencies to challenge and support and look at all the factors blocking children from attending school

The Director of Children Schools and Families provided additional information in response to questions about the School Standards Report:

- The number of children in Home Education is rising across the Country, but there is no evidence that Schools are forcing children into Home Education. There are a number of possible reasons for Home education. The School Environment can be very challenging for some children particularly those who are not attaining, those with SEN or SEMH needs and those being bullied.
- Schools need to achieve a balance between increasing attainment and having an environment that promotes child's mental health.
- Parents of SEN children may exercise their right to Home Education until the right placement is found.
- We do evaluate the quality of Home Education and if it is not meeting needs then we can put a school attendance order in place.
- EHCP funding is an area of challenge, there is a rising demand, we are spending more but not meeting all needs.
- Have to think about what 'good' looks like, it is different for different children. Children are ready at different times, they are all individual people – we can follow the data but it is only a snapshot; the 2017 cohort is completely different to 2018 cohort. It is Important to emphasise that all children are individuals, and cohorts will be different, these differences are not for lack of a plan.

5 TRACKING AN EHCP COHORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Panel noted the proposal of the Director of Children, Schools and Families, for a Task Group based on a study of individual young people with EHCPs as they transition from Children's to Adult Services. She explained that some would have

needs that would be eligible for Adult services, and some not. She proposed that such a study would last for longer than one year and would give the panel an opportunity to explore how the system worked.

Panel Members noted that although this proposal was not the same as the current Transition Task Group work, they would like to see the results of the Transition Task Group before making a decision on this proposed Cohort Study.

Panel Members suggested discussing it at the Topic Workshop on 20 May 2019.

6 PROGRESS MONITORING - CARE LEAVER ACCOMMODATION (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Social care and Inclusion presented the report on Care Leaver Accommodation.

The Panel welcomed the report and asked for a further update to come back to the Panel later in the Year.

7 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member of Education gave an update:

- Secondary School Offer day was on the 1st March. A small number of children did not get a place but the Admissions Team are working to find places.
- Advice to parents who did not get their first preference is to ensure that you are put on, and stay on, the waiting list for your preferred school but to accept the place that has been offered.
- Attended an Anti-Idling event at Morden Primary School. Members asked to be kept informed of other similar events in the Borough
- In reply to a question regarding School results, the Cabinet Member for Education said that she planned to work with Officers to ensure that they are doing their best for Schools in the borough.

The Vice Chair reminded the Panel that 5 Schools in the Borough had received less than Good in recent OFSTED Inspections. He asked in particular about how performance could be improved at Stanford and Merton Abbey Schools. The Cabinet Member for Education explained that Stanford had gone down to a single form and joined an Academy group with a good record, there are also plans to site a SEN Hub on the School site. Officers reiterated the process for helping schools explained in the Schools Standards Report. A panel member explained that Merton Abbey had a very disadvantaged intake and that their current trend is upwards.

Councillor Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave an update:

- Attended the Merton Safeguarding Awayday, it was disappointing that the Police were not able to attend. The priorities up to 2021 were set as:
 1. Early Help with intervention at any Stage
 2. Think Family with particular focus on Domestic Abuse
 3. Contextual Safeguarding
 4. SEND funding
- She also informed the panel that she had signed a joint letter asking Government to properly fund SEN Schools.
- A Panel member asked if Domestic Violence could be an issue for a Task Group. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services informed the Panel that she attended a VAWG (Violence against Women and Girls) board and this could inform any CYP considerations.

8 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

The Director of Children, School and Families presented her Departmental Report

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 9)

The Interim Head for Policy, Planning and Performance, presented the Performance Report The Panel noted the Report and the contributions of the Performance Monitoring Lead Members; Councillors Eleanor Stringer and Hayley Ormrod.

The Panel paid particular attention to the figure for the percentage of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time. Officers explained that this requirement for repeat child protection plans is very often linked with Domestic Abuse. The Panel noted that the issue of Domestic Violence and Abuse is considered by partnership working across Council departments.

The Panel noted that there are still some areas where more detail on target measures is required.

10 SCRUTINY TOPIC SUGGESTIONS AND WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 10)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families asked the Panel to note the success during the year of 2018-2019, of the Young People's Panel and asked Members to continue to think about how to include the voice of Young People in its work. This was supported as a theme to take forward.

Panel Members asked if they could consider issues linked to Domestic Violence in Families, as mentioned in their discussion during the performance management item, and noted that this was a cross cutting theme.

Panel Members expressed a strong desire to look at the issue for Schools of their PFI contracts and the legacy of these contracts.

The Chair reminded members that they could submit any further items to the Head of Scrutiny.

The Panel noted that the following items are planned for the meeting 26th June 2019:

- Air Quality in Schools
- Report from Children's' Mental Health Task Group
- Presentation from Director and Cabinet Members of Key Challenges and issues for the coming year.

RESOLVED

- A. That the Panel reviewed its 2018/19 work programme, identifying what worked well, what worked less well and what the Panel would like to do differently next year;
- B. That the Panel suggested items for inclusion in the 2019/20 work programme – both agenda items and potential task group review topics; and
- C. That the Panel advised on agenda items for its meeting on 26 June 2019.