

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 5 November 2013 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Cynthia Dereli (Chair)

County Councillors

P Buckley	K Iddon
Mrs S Charles	B Murray
A Cheetham	R Newman-Thompson
C Crompton	S Perkins
B Dawson	M Perks
C Henig	

Co-opted members

Mrs Janet Hamid, Representing Parent Governors (Secondary)
Miss Teresa Jones, Representing RC Schools
Mr Fred Kershaw, Representing CE Schools
Mr Kenvyn Wales, Representing Free Church Schools
Mr John Withington, Representing Parent Governors (Primary)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence presented at the meeting.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest in relation to matters appearing on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2013

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2013 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. A report on the local authority's leadership of school improvement support

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People introduced a report on the Authority's draft strategy

for school improvement and the main features of the evaluation model being used to review the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements in Lancashire. The report highlighted the key findings from the initial review of support for school improvement including strengths and priorities for development.

In considering the draft strategy for school improvement and the self evaluation tool members raised the following points:

- Whether there was a school improvement board and whether elected members sat on it, Mr Stott informed the Committee that there was a School Improvement Challenge Board which met fortnightly and which was comprised of the School Improvement Team, Human Resources, Governance, Finance and other teams as necessary to consider monitoring and intervention issues. Elected members did not sit on the Board.
- The Chair asked that a guide to current acronyms used in the Directorate for Children and Young People be produced for use by members of the Committee

Resolved: That

- i. The report on the local authority's leadership of school improvement support be noted.
- ii. A guide to acronyms used in the Directorate for Children and Young People be produced.

5. Children and Young People not participating in a school setting

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services, Directorate for Children and Young People, introduced a report which updated the Committee on the performance and progress of four of the teams working closely with groups of children and young people currently not participating in education in a school setting as follows:

1. Work done to support children and young people who were "Persistently Absent" (PA) from school, reported at the meeting by Frances Molloy, Schools Attendance Lead, Directorate for Children and Young People
2. Work done to support children and young people who were "Permanently Excluded" from school, reported by Audrey Swann, Acting Head of Alternative and Complementary Education and Residential Services (ACERS).
3. Work done to support Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) children and young people who were not educated in school or electively home educated, reported by Joe Dykes, Head of GRT Achievement.
4. Work done to support children and young people who were "missing from education, (CME), reported by Susan Robinson, CME Co-ordinator, and Paul Bainbridge, County Pupil Access Manager.

Information was also provided in the report on the themed audit that the Directorate for Children and Young People was carrying out around "missing children" and the connectivity of the Local Authority and other partner services around supporting this broader group. It was envisaged that the findings of this themed audit would be reported back to the Committee possibly in July 2014.

The Committee considered the work done by each of the four teams in detail as follows:

Persistent Absence (PA)

It was reported that the use of Persistent Absence as a measure was introduced in 2006 and at that time related to pupils who had an overall absence rate of around 20 per cent or more. This measure was reduced during the 2010-11 academic year to identify pupils who had an overall absence rate of around 15 per cent or more. This was measured as pupils having 38 or more sessions of absence (both authorised and unauthorised) across the Autumn and Spring Terms combined, or 46 or more sessions of absence over the whole school year (measured up to the summer half term break).

The local authority worked to ensure that schools had a clear understanding of those pupils who were Persistent Absentees or were on track to become PA if their attendance did not improve.

In considering Persistent Absence members made the following comments:

- How monitoring of children who were Persistent Absentees was carried out cross border with neighbouring authorities and the time it took to deal with cross border issues. Frances Molloy responded that protocols were in place for liaising with other authorities and that if legal action was required it was undertaken by the authority where the child attended school.
- Whether work done around Persistent Absence linked in with the Youth Offending Team. Ms Molloy stated that action plans for Persistent Absentees would involve all relevant agencies
- The comment was made that because of the smaller number of pupils in special schools, just one or two PAs significantly increased the %. As special schools dealt with different issues, PA rates would differ by school.
- All types of absences were included in the report and the comment was made that unauthorised absences ought to be targeted.
- A concern was raised regarding the accurate recording of absence data by schools. The Committee was informed that it was illegal to falsify the register and that electronic registration now made that difficult.
- Members welcomed the work done by officers to support PAs and also the work carried out with schools to identify barriers to education and to remove them.

Permanent Exclusion

It was reported that in secondary schools, the trend over the last 3 years had been a reduction in permanent exclusions in the majority of districts with an overall decrease in secondary permanent exclusions across Lancashire of 1% in 2012 – 13. In 2012 – 13 Preston remained one of the highest excluding districts with Burnley showing a marked increase in exclusions from previous years. Lancashire was participating in the 3 year DfE National Exclusion Trial due to end in July 2014, testing a proposal to shift the responsibility for permanently excluded pupils from the Local Authority to school.

However, the number of primary school exclusions in area south/central had over the past 3 years been higher than other areas in Lancashire and the trend for south and east areas had increased slightly. The north area had consistently decreased.

Members commented on the work carried out around Permanent Exclusion as follows:

- Working in partnership with Head Teachers was key to dealing with the problem
- That the findings of the Task and Finish Group, led by the Inclusion Disability and Support Service (IDSS), which was set up to look into the relationship between SEND and exclusion in order to more thoroughly analyse the trends and issues within Lancashire and develop strategies to address issues identified, be fed back to the Committee when known.

Local Authority support for the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children

Members welcomed the work done by the team which dealt with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children with around 70% of families now having education as a priority. It was reported that in the ten year period between 2003 and 2013, the numbers of GRT children attending school had risen in all year groups. There had been significant rises in uptake of pre-school provision and in transfer to secondary school.

In considering the report, the following point was made:

- That it would be helpful for the % of GRT children on roll in school to be broken down to District level and provided to members

Children Missing Education (CME)

It was reported that for CME there were established referral procedures with Pupil Access linked to admission appeal and fair access protocol processes. There were two types of referral (split 50/50 over a year):

- Tracking – for cases where the pupil was on a school or academy roll but their whereabouts was unknown and which involved calling a multi-agency meeting to move matters forward.
- Placement – where the pupil required an educational placement. The CME team accompanied many parents and pupils to school meetings to negotiate start dates. In addition, at secondary level pupils the CME team identified and brokered alternative provision where a mainstream placement was not likely to be successful.

In considering CME, members raised the following points:

- How young people, particularly girls, who did not return to school in Autumn were tracked. Ms Robinson responded that it would be possible to provide members with tracking figures, for information, outside the meeting. Young people were also tracked at school on a lesson by lesson basis. Pastoral managers in school were aware of particular issues and worked with the Hate and Diversity Team to address them.
- A request was made for comparative data on a year by year basis to be provided.
- A query was raised regarding the time scale for organising cross-boundary placements. Members were informed that most primary school placements were organised within a week but that secondary placements were more difficult because of matching students' options. Since September there was no longer the requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in year admissions but Lancashire continued to be watchful of out of county moves.
- That the legal responsibility of the Local Authority was to make arrangements, as far as possible, to identify children who were not receiving education. This could be achieved by raising awareness via the Police, the NHS, Social Workers and other well established networks, for example.
- With regard to Foster Children, Children's Social Care and the Social Worker were responsible for flagging up to the CME team any child requiring a school place, whether the child was coming into Lancashire from another Authority or moving within Lancashire. Usually a placement would be found within 10 school days, with 20 days being the maximum length of time taken.
- More work was needed to ensure joined up working between the different teams and agencies in the Authority

Resolved: That:

- i. The teams working closely with groups of children and young people not participating in a school setting be congratulated on the work in this field.
- ii. A further report on the themed audit around Children Missing Education be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

- iii. The % of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children on roll in school at District level be provided to members of the Committee.
- iv. Tracking figures of those young people who did not return to school in Autumn be provided to members of the Committee.
- v. Comparative data on referrals to the CME team on a year by year basis be provided to the members of the Committee.

6. A summary of the provisional results at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 at Lancashire and District level

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People, presented a report on the overall attainment of pupils in Lancashire schools at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2013 and informed the meeting that the report was based on provisional data which had not yet been validated. The results had been analysed at District level and showed progress over the past three years.

With regard to the 2013 Key Stage 2 results it was reported that overall attainment in Lancashire continued to rise and was 2% above the national average at 77%.

With regard to the 2013 Key Stage 4 results, it was reported that overall attainment in Lancashire rose compared with 2012 and remained around 1% above the national average.

A request was made by the Chair that all County Councillors be notified, for their information, when the detailed results data was available.

Resolved: That:

- i. The summary of the provisional results at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 at Lancashire and District level be noted.
- ii. Further detailed information relating to individual schools regarding attainment be circulated to all County Councillors once available.

7. Work Plan 2013/2014

Members considered the work plan summarising the work to be undertaken by the Committee in the coming months and noted that it would be updated and presented to each meeting of the committee for information.

In response to a request for Elective Home Education to be added to the plan as a topic for consideration, Mr Stott informed members that a previous Task Group of the Committee had produced a report on Elective Home Education which could

be circulated to current members of the Committee for their information prior to deciding whether to consider this topic further.

The Chair updated the Committee on the progress of the Task Group set up to consider the 'Achievement of Pupils on Free School Meals'. It was envisaged that the draft Task Group report would be presented to the Committee at its March 2014 meeting.

Resolved: That

- i. The work plan be noted.
- ii. The report produced by a previous Task Group of the Committee on Elective Home Education be circulated to members for information.

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business for discussion at the meeting.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 11 March 2014 at 10.00am in Cabinet Room C (The Duke of Lancaster Room), County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston