

## **Lancashire County Council**

### **Education Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 13th March, 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - County Hall, Preston**

#### **Present:**

County Councillor Mrs Pat Case (Chair)

#### **County Councillors**

K Bailey	J Jackson
Mrs R Blow	A Kay
Mrs S Derwent	Y Motala
C Evans	S Riches
P Evans	C Wells
C Grunshaw	M Younis

#### **Co-opted members**

Mrs Janet Hamid, Representing Parent Governors (Secondary)  
Fred Kershaw, Representing CE Schools

County Councillor J Jackson replaced County Councillor K Brown for this meeting.

County Councillor P Steen and County Councillor J Mein attended the meeting under Standing Order 19.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of County Councillor Knox, County Councillor Jones, County Councillor Fishwick, Mr T Charnock (co opted member representing RC Schools) and Mr K Wales (co opted member representing Free Church Schools).

#### **2. Disclosure of Personal/Prejudicial Interests.**

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

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on the 1st November 2011**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011, be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Programme of meetings 2012/13**

**Resolved:** That future meetings of the Committee be held at 10.00am in Cabinet Room 'C' at County Hall, Preston on the following dates in accordance with the decision of the Full County Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2011.

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (budget)  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013

## **5. Student Support Appeals Committee**

Mr Hart, the Director for Resources, Planning and Business Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People, presented a report in response to issues raised regarding the information presented to the Student Support Appeals Committee when considering requests for assistance with home to school transport.

County Councillor Steen, the Chair of the Student Support Appeals Committee, informed the meeting that since its creation the Committee had considered 433 appeals and the type of information presented as part of appeals had evolved in response to requests made by the Committee in the light of experience. However, it was felt that there were a small number of instances where the family circumstances were such that the Committee felt it would be beneficial if there were greater dialogue between the authority and the appellant before the matter came to the Committee, particularly with regard to highlighting the availability of other forms of support which may be available to the family concerned.

It was recognised that there was currently a validation process in relation to information presented or issues raised as part of an appeal and that this process could be improved/expanded, though there were concerns regarding the potential setting of precedents or in relation to data protection. Whilst acknowledging that there may be some obstacles both the Chair and other members of the Student Support Appeals Committee present at the meeting emphasised that in certain circumstances it was felt that issues raised as part of the transport appeal should be considered in a wider context in order that the Committee be provided with as much information/clarity as possible when considering the appeal.

Mr Hart reported that the County Council currently provided appellants with guidance on how to submit their appeal and that whilst Officers were available to assist the onus was on the appellant to provide information in support of their appeal. In response the Chair suggested that the current guidance could be examined as part of a review involving Officers and members of the Student Support Appeals Committee

It was noted that the Committee was able to exercise discretion regarding appeals and in some cases consideration of an appeal could be deferred or temporary assistance provided while whilst the Committee sought additional information.

## **Resolved:**

1. That arrangements be made for members of the Student Support Appeals Committee to meet with the relevant Officers from the Directorate for Children and Young People to further discuss potential improvements to the procedure regarding transport appeals.
2. That a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of those discussions.

## **6. Children in Care - Educational Progress**

Sue Parr, Senior Manager and Associate Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After, from the Alternative and Complimentary Education and Residential Service (ACERS) presented a report in response to questions raised at the previous Committee regarding the attainment of children in care and the following points were discussed.

- With regard to the reduction in the percentage of Children Looked After (CLA) at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 achieving national attainment targets when compared to the figure for the previous academic year Ms Parr reported that this was due to a higher proportion of pupils in those years with statements of special educational needs. It was further reported that progress was improving with 12.2% of the cohort achieving 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths as opposed to the predicted 9%. Ms Parr reported that the figure was expected to increase further to 15% in the future though she cautioned that the results would be dependent on the stability of the cohort in terms of whether pupils remained in the same placement/school and this was something which would be monitored.

It was also noted that in both Key Stage 2 and 4 the majority of SEN pupils were making good progress when measured against goals set using the PIVATS or P-Scales systems (which informed target setting for pupils of all ages whose performance is outside national expectations) so that attainment against set targets could be monitored and progress evaluated.

- As the previous report had focussed on the progress of CLA at Key Stage 2 and 4 which was only a small cohort of all CLA Ms Parr informed the meeting that the progress of all other CLA was monitored using Electronic Personal Education Plans (E-PEP). However, Ms Parr acknowledged that the monitoring was not as robust as she would wish and so the current arrangements would be subject to a review which was intended to produce more educationally challenging targets which would then be monitored and evaluated.

It was also reported that IT equipment had been put into residential care homes for use by CLA and that Educational Consultants were working with care homes staff and foster carers in order to provide support with regard to the children's educational development.

- In response to the concern that the cumulative way in which data was collected would skew results Ms Parr informed the meeting that the County Council was required to collect data in a particular way so that it would then be comparable with data from other authorities. However, it was noted that in future more detailed data would also be produced for internal monitoring purposes.
- It was reported that in order to ensure that CLA pupils made good progress in further/higher education they would have a Pathway Plan which would set targets and be monitored in the same way as an E-PEP. In addition the Virtual School Educational Consultants would also work with colleagues within Children's Social Care to ensure CLA receive effective support.
- In response to a previous query about how easy it was for CLA to be admitted to schools Ms Parr reported that she was unaware of any CLA who had not been provided with a place at their school of choice.
- Ms Parr informed the meeting that there were currently 149 CLA in Lancashire from other authorities though she recognised that this figure only related to those CLA in schools.
- It was further reported that 273 of Lancashire's CLA were currently educated outside of the County and that their progress was monitored via the Personal Educational Plans, 6 monthly LAC Review and the Virtual School Educational Consultants.
- In response to concern regarding the possible impact on CLA if a school transferred to an Academy Ms Parr reported that such situations would be closely monitored by the Virtual School Educational Consultants in order to ensure that the needs of CLA were addressed and that they made progress.

In considering the report the Committee recognised the importance of setting challenging/achievable targets and monitoring progress to ensure that CLA were able to achieve their potential. The need to ensure that examples of best practice were shared amongst schools was noted and Ms Parr informed the meeting that designated teachers would also receive training with regard to PEPs and their increased role/responsibilities in relation to CLA. It was also noted that as discussed earlier carers and fosters carers would also be given training and support in relation to Personal Educational Plans.

**Resolved:** That a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee once the new procedures are in operation so that their effectiveness can be evaluated.

**7. A summary of the results for key groups of pupils at risk of underachievement in Lancashire at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.**

Mr Dyson-Knight, Senior Adviser/Team Leader Secondary (Secondary Post 16 Team) from the Directorate for Children and Young People, presented a further report in relation to the attainment and progress of key groups of pupils who are at risk of underachievement in Lancashire schools at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2011.

It was reported that whilst the attainment of pupils in Lancashire was consistently above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 and 4 there were a number of groups of pupils whose attainment remained low and whose rates of progress had been below that of other pupils. The particular groups which had been identified as being at risk of underachievement included pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), those from Bangladeshi/Pakistani backgrounds and pupils with Special Educational Needs.

An analysis of the results for these groups at Key Stages 2 and 4 was presented and the following issues were raised by the Committee.

- The provision of early years support was considered important in improving attainment for the groups which had been specified and also other minorities.

In response Mr Dyson-Knight reported that through the Childrens Centres the County Council was providing the Best Start Lancashire programme which provided early support for families and children aged between 4 and 7 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2). It was reported that the programme was funded through efficiency savings and the County Council was committed to making further savings to allow the programme to continue up to 2013/14 by which time it was anticipated that the Department for Education funded Pupil Premium (targeted at pupils eligible for FSM) would be at a level to enable schools to maintain the family support.

It was noted that in the future Ofsted would monitor how the Pupil Premiums were used and schools would be required to show that pupils had made progress as a result of the funding. In addition the DfE would publish information about schools and if outcomes were not seen to be improving then schools would be asked to provide evidence of how the Pupil Premium funding was being used.

- It was recognised that there was a percentage of children from minority ethnic communities who did not access the services provided through Childrens Centres and did not have English as their first language on entering primary education and the county Council would continue to work towards addressing this.

Mr Dyson-Knight informed the meeting that other minority groups were monitored though the numbers of children from those groups was small and it was noted that monitoring could be difficult given the transient nature of those families. With regard to the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller community it was reported that Ofsted was satisfied with the level of services provided.

- The provision of more detailed information was discussed and it was suggested that attainment figures for individual schools in each District would

be useful.

In response Mr Dyson-Knight reported that similar information had previously been provided to Lancashire locals for consideration and was currently provided for Childrens Trusts together with a commentary on the data and suggested priorities. It was noted that following the disbanding of Lancashire Locals some of the newly formed Three Tier Forums had requested the information.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **8. Elective Home Education**

Mr Stott, the Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People presented a report regarding the recent review of the County Councils Elective Home Education (EHE) procedures

It was reported that the review was undertaken following the transfer of functions between teams within the authority and in order to address concerns identified by officers and the home educating community in respect of the procedures and processes which were previously in place.

Mr Stott informed the meeting that following consultations towards the end of last year initial proposals had been revised before they were presented to and subsequently approved by the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools (see <http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1560>).

In considering the report the following issues were raised by members of the Committee.

- Elective home education had been the subject of an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group in 2009 which had made a number of recommendations, though it was felt that these had not been fully taken into account during the more recent review (see item 6 at <http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/council/meetings/displayAgendas.asp?meetid=5884>).
- It was recognised that whilst the County Council had a duty to provide the offer of a formal educational system parents had a right to choose to educate their children at home. However, there were concerns that whilst schools were subject to external monitoring to ensure standards there was no such monitoring for children who were educated at home.
- Whilst it was noted that the recent consultation had involved some responses from known home educators and also the Lancashire Home Educators Forum there was concern that families from the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) community may not have had sufficient opportunity to take part in the consultation. In response Mr Stott informed the meeting that the County Councils GRT Service had been used to highlight the consultation and a number of families from that community had been involved.

- In response to a query regarding the attainment of children who were home educated Mr Stott reported that it may be difficult to establish the level of attainment because there was no requirement for such children to undertake formal examinations.

The Committee noted that the intention was to review the recently approved procedures after they had been in operation for 12 months. However, it was felt that in view of the issues raised a further report should be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in July 2012.

**Resolved:**

1. That a further report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in relation to the following.
  - a) A more detailed breakdown of the consultation process in relation to the review of the County Councils Elective Home Education procedures and the findings.
  - b) A response to the concerns raised by the Committee as set out above.
  - c) Clarification of the current legal position in relation to the County Councils duties and responsibilities toward children who are home educated.
2. That all members of the Committee be provided with a copy of the Elective Home Education Procedure document as approved by the cabinet member for Children and Schools on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

**9. Urgent Business**

County Councillor Riches informed the Committee that she had raised a number of issues as potential items of future business for the Committee and was satisfied that they would be discussed with the Chair at the next agenda setting meeting.

**10. Date of the Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held at 10.00am on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012 in Cabinet Room 'C' at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher  
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall  
Preston