

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 26th March, 2019 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Christian Wakeford (Chair)

County Councillors

M Dad	J Potter
L Beavers	J Rear
A Cheetham	D T Smith
S Clarke	D Stansfield
B Dawson	P Steen
A Kay	C Towneley
J Molineux	J Burrows
E Nash	

Co-opted members

Mr Ian Beck, Representing RC Schools
Dr Sam Johnson, Representing CE Schools
Mr Kenvyn Wales, Representing Free Church Schools
Mr John Withington, Representing Parent Governors
(Primary)

County Councillor Joan Burrows replaced County Councillor Andrew Gardiner for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Janet Hamid.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2019

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 6 February 2019 be confirmed and as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Exclusions, Attendance, Transport and Elective Home Education

The Chair welcomed Steve Belbin, Interim Director of Education and Skills; Debbie Ormerod, Admission Manager; Frances Molloy, School Attendance and CME Lead; and Oliver Starkey, Head of Service, Public and Integrated Transport to the meeting.

The report presented provided an overview of the challenges around attendance and exclusions. It also provided information on children missing education and those who are educated at home. In addition, it provided details transport to Pupil Referral Units. Further to the report, a presentation was provided to the committee.

Attendance and Exclusions

It was reported that attendance rate in both primary and secondary schools were higher than the national average, while the exclusion rate in Lancashire was 2.25% above the national average. The committee was provided a breakdown of the exclusion figures from both primary and secondary schools by district, by permanent and temporary exclusions, and by the reasons for the exclusion.

In response to questions raised by members following this section of the presentation, the following information was provided:

- Concerns were expressed on the figures provided in relation to the reasons for exclusions. It was acknowledged that there could be a number of reasons for exclusion and further detail would be included in the narrative on the exclusion form. However, an exercise could be undertaken by the LA to look at particular issues such as racial or homophobic abuse to determine if there had been a rise.
- A definition of a managed move was provided, and it was noted that a managed move is a mechanism for when a child who may be leading down a path to a permanent exclusion moves to a new school and is in agreement between the two schools, the parent and the pupil. In terms of how a managed move works when the new school is full, it was noted that the guidance from the DFE allows a managed move where a school is full.

The Chair requested further clarification on information within the report and the following were clarified:

- The figures provided for the number of exclusions are the instances of exclusion and not the number of pupils being excluded.
- ICT as one of the reasons for exclusion relates to the use of social media.

Children Look After (CLA)

With regards to Children Looked After (CLA), the figures for the CLA for both primary and secondary schools who had been excluded were provided to the committee. It was noted that the number of CLA in secondary school is far greater than the number of CLA in primary school.

It was also reported that approximately 30% of all CLA exclusions have Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND).

Elective Home Education

With regards to Elective Home Education, it was reported that there were 1428 known children in Lancashire receiving home education and this number is continuing to rise. The statistics for the reasons why parents chose to home school their children were provided to the committee. However, it was noted that a reason was not provided by around 50% of parents.

In response to questions raised by members following this section of the presentation, the following information was clarified:

- It was noted that although the Local Authority doesn't have the right of entry into a child's home, they would always make an initial contact with the family, once they have been informed of a child receiving home education. This contact would come in the form of telephone advice or signposting them to the relevant resources. A home visit would always be included as part of this, subject to the families consent.
- It was reported that the number of parents who take up the offer of a home visit was between 15% – 20%, whereas it was reported that between 30% - 40% had taken up the offer to receive only the information and advice.
- It was confirmed that once a concern has been reported about the suitability of a child's education, the Local Authority would then have the powers to make contact with the family and to take the concern forward.
- It was noted that since children being home schooled do not need to take part in public examinations, there were no attainment statistics available.
- It was noted that when a child is not on a school roll, they could register to take their exams as an external candidate. The Local Authority has collated a list of all the facilities that offer examinations for external candidates and this is published on LCC's website.

Children Missing Education

The presentation provided information on the differences between Children Missing Out on Education (CMooE) and Children Missing Education (CME).

- CMooE is defined as children of a compulsory school age who are registered at a school but are not receiving an education.
- CME is defined as children of a compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not currently receiving an education otherwise than at a school such as a College Placement or Elective Home Education.

It was noted that there are Information Sharing Agreements in place between Health and District Councils, so if they are alerted to a child missing education during their work with a family, they would pass on the information to the Local Authority to make contact with the family.

Transport to Pupil Referral Units

An overview of the transportation of a pupil to and from a Pupil Referral Unit was provided to the committee. The number of pupils who currently receive the service and the transportation cost for the service was also provided.

It was reported that from March 2019, the service were transporting 289 pupils to a Pupil Referral Unit. The cost for this annually was over £1m.

It was reported that Cabinet had previously approved a proposal to look at a more cost-effective approach and which would look at the different options available to transporting the pupil's to and from the Pupil Referral Unit.

Resolved: That;

- i) The report be noted.
- ii) The work being undertaken to address any issues and sustain improvement around permanent exclusions be considered.
- iii) The review to be undertaken on transport to Pupil Referral Units and the wider options available be noted.
- iv) A letter drafted by the Chair and the Cabinet Member of Children and Young People be sent to the Secretary of State for Education on the release of the guidance on Elective Home Education.
- v) The guidance be reviewed by the Committee.
- vi) A report be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee on Pupil Referral Units, once the consultation has been completed and before a report on the options is agreed by Cabinet.

5. Update from the Chair

The Chair provided a verbal update to the committee and the following were noted:

- An update was provided on the letter previously sent to the Secretary of State regarding the early years funding. It was noted that no response had yet been received.

- The Chair reminded the committee of the date for the SEND Inquiry workshop which is due to take place on Wednesday 5 June in Committee Room A at 9.30am. It was noted that this would be a joint session with Children's Services Scrutiny Committee and would primarily be looking at the transitioning from primary to secondary school for pupils with EHC plans and the challenges they faced.
- A further reminder was given to the committee that a work programming session for the 2019/20 municipal year would be held after the county council's AGM meeting in May 2019. This session would allow committee members to identify items to be included within the work programme for the next municipal year. It was noted that the date for this session would be circulated to members soon.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

6. Education Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19

The Chair presented to the committee the work programme for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year. It was noted that the committee is coming to an end of the current work programme for this municipal year.

Two potential topics was raised for a future meeting of the committee. These topics were:

- i) Physical education levels in schools and how much is done within at-risk groups like pupil with disabilities; and
- ii) Variations of the work done on school places.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee will take place on 18 June 2019 at 10.30am in Cabinet Room C at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston