

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 6 November 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Mrs Pat Case (Chair)

County Councillors

K Bailey	C Grunshaw
Mrs R Blow	A Jones
K Brown	A Kay
Mrs S Derwent	A Knox
C Evans	S Riches
P Evans	C Wells
S Fishwick	M Younis

Co-opted members

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of County Councillor Y Motala.

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 10 July 2012

Ms Broadley, Principal Scrutiny Officer, reminded the members of the Committee that in view of the clash of commitments reported at the last meeting arrangements had been made for the meeting on the 12th March 2013 to be held at 2pm in Cabinet Room 'D', County Hall, Preston.

Resolved: That the update mentioned above be noted and the Minutes of the meeting held on the 10th July 2012 confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

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

Mr Stott, the 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 and informed the meeting that the report was based on provisional data which would only be validated early in the New Year.

With regard to the 2012 Key Stage 2 results it was noted that overall attainment had risen when compared with the previous year and that in nine Districts the level of attainment was above the national average of 79%.

In discussing the results the following points were raised.

- Whilst overall attainment had increased there was still some concern regarding the level of attainment in East Lancashire and Mr Stott reported that Officers from the Children and Young People Directorate would continue to support schools through the development of Action Plans. It was noted that outstanding schools would also provide assistance to other schools in the area in order to share best practice and improve performance.
- It was suggested that in order to improve levels of attainment attention needed to be focussed on all pupils in school and not on any particular Year Group. In response Mr Stott reported that the County Council allocated each child a Unique Pupil Number when they entered the formal education system which enabled their progress through the system to be tracked and both attainment and the level of value added to an individual's education to be assessed.
- It was recognised that whilst there was a historical link between attainment and deprivation there were examples of schools in deprived areas which had been judged to be outstanding and where attainment had improved significantly. There was general agreement that social deprivation was not an excuse for low attainment and it was felt that good leadership, quality teachers and working in partnership with parents, governors and others were all crucial in order to ensure that pupil attainment improved.
- In response to a query regarding the attainment of pupils from schools which had previously converted to Academies Mr Stott reported that many Academies continued to work with the County Council and had responded positively to requests for information regarding performance.

With regard to the Key Stage 4 results it was reported that overall attainment in Lancashire had fallen slightly last year though it remained 1% above the national average. Attainment had increased in Chorley, West Lancashire, Burnley and Rossendale but had fallen elsewhere. It was noted that whilst attainment in Burnley was the lowest across the County the rate of improvement for that

District was better than both the Lancashire and National average and the gap in attainment had narrowed.

In considering the Key Stage 4 results the following points were discussed.

- It was recognised that the decrease in the proportion of GCSEs awarded an A*-C grade in June 2012 in the core subjects of maths, science and particularly English had influenced the levels of attainment referred to in the report.
- In response to a query Mr Stott acknowledged that investment in buildings and facilities was important though he suggested that without strong leadership and good quality teachers such measures alone would not lead to improved attainment.
- It was also noted that schools had been provided with an indication of their performance as measured against the English Baccalaureate, where pupils had secured a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects including English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language.

Resolved:

1. That the comments of the Committee be noted.
2. That further information regarding attainment be circulated to the members of the Committee early in the New Year once the validated data and information relating to individual schools was available.

5. Impact of partnership working with schools below the Floor Standard

Mr Stott, the Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People, presented a report regarding the impact of the School Improvement Service/Schools Forum working in partnership with the lowest attaining schools.

Figures were presented regarding the performance in primary schools where below 60% of pupils achieved Level 4+ in English and Maths and it was noted that year on year there had been a significant improvement in terms of attainment. It was also noted that the same group had achieved a more significant rise (22%) in those subjects since 2011 than the national increase of 5%.

It was further reported that over the last three years levels of attainment had also increased by over 15% in the 18 secondary schools in Lancashire where 40% of pupils had gained 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Mathematics in 2008/09.

In considering the report the Committee recognised that the improvements in attainment were the result of the School Improvement Team working in partnership with the Schools Forum, headteachers, teachers, governors and parents. It was also noted that an article regarding the work of the service was due to be published in the times educational Supplement.

In order to support the ongoing work of the Team it was suggested that consideration be given to establishing some form of annual award for the school which was deemed by professionals to have improved the most.

Resolved:

1. That the School Improvement Team be congratulated on the improvements which have been made over the last three years in relation to attainment in those schools which were below the floor standard.
2. That in order to support the ongoing work of the School Improvement Team consideration be given to establishing an annual award which the Chair of the County Council could present to the school which was judged by professionals to have improved the most.
3. That members of the Committee be informed when the article regarding the work of the School Improvement Service is to appear in the Times Education Supplement.

6. Mentoring in Schools Programme

Mrs Morgan, from the Communities and Citizens Talent Management Team within the Learning and Development Service, presented a report regarding a recent decision by the Cabinet to establish a mentoring programme in schools over the next 5 years using members of the ex service personnel.

It was reported that the programme would recruit, train and support members of the ex-service community in Lancashire in order that they could mentor young people in secondary education Yrs 9, 10 and 11 who are struggling in school and also gain the skills they needed to progress after the programme to find work outside of the forces.

Ms Carthy, Senior Human Resources Officer from the Learning and Development Service reported that for the first year the programme would operate as a pilot in Hyndburn and Pendle and would involve the following schools:

Hyndburn
Norden High School and Sports College
The Hollins Technology College
Mount Carmel RC High School
Rhyddings Business and Enterprise School

Pendle
Colne Primet High School
West Craven High Technology College
Colne Park High School
St John Fisher/Thomas More RC High School
Marsden Heights Community College
Pendle Vale College

In considering the report the following issues were discussed.

- It was reported that a rigorous recruitment and selection process was underway and it was anticipated that up to 15 mentors would be in post from January, 2014, though this figure would be dependent of the calibre of the applicants. Over the five years the programme was expected to recruit a minimum of 50 ex service personnel.
- Each mentor would have a caseload of up to 30 young people at any one time and in the event that a young person transferred to an alternative school during the programme they would still be able to be mentored.
- In response to concerns regarding recruitment it was reported that applications had been received from both male and female ex service personnel and the recruitment process and subsequent training for successful candidates would be managed by HR professionals in order to ensure that any concerns around equality/diversity or child protection and safeguarding were addressed.
- It was noted that once mentors were in post they would be managed on a day to day basis by senior management within the school and in response to a query regarding the need for additional training for Managers Mr Stott, the Director of Universal and Early Support Services, reported that the mentoring programme would build on existing mentoring schemes which operated in schools.
- The intention to include Academies in the mentoring programme if it was felt that young people there would benefit in terms of their attainment was noted.
- It was suggested that consideration be given to including an alternative provision school in the mentoring programme in order to support young people who were not in employment, education or training.

Resolved:

1. That the introduction of a mentoring programme in schools using ex-service personnel be welcomed.
2. That the views of the Committee specified above be noted and taken in to account when developing/implementing the programme.

3. That a further report be presented to the Committee once the pilot programme has been in operation for two terms.

- 7. Update on the current Lancashire County Council position on Academies**

Mr Stott, the Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People, informed the meeting that nationally there were 2,373 open Academies in England of which 805 were primary schools, 1512 secondary schools and 56 special academies. He added that in Lancashire there were 21 academies (4 primary and 17 secondary) with a further 4 schools in the process of converting and it was noted that the position in Lancashire was significantly lower than the national average.

The Committee was informed that recently it had been announced that the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Blackburn was to apply to the Secretary of State to become an academy. Whilst it was recognised that the school was not within boundary of the Lancashire Education Authority it was felt that the conversion of this and other schools close to the County boundary could have implications for the County Council as many young people from within Lancashire would attend those schools.

In response to a query Mr Stott confirmed that the new academy presumption within the Education Act 2011 required local authorities to first seek proposals for an academy where it was considered that there was a need for a new school, for example associated with new housing development. However, it was noted that the presumption did not apply to faith schools.

It was acknowledged that the information presented to the committee only related to those schools which had already converted to academies and Mr Stott suggested that further information could be provided regarding schools which were currently considering converting. The Committee noted that the Department for Education no longer published information regarding schools which were in the conversion process.

Resolved:

1. That the current position regarding Academies both nationally and in Lancashire be noted.

2. That the Committee continue to be kept informed of developments, including the potential impact for Lancashire of schools in neighbouring authorities converting to Academies.

8. School Funding Reform

Mr Edwards, the Schools Funding and Financial Services Manager from the Children and Young People Directorate, presented a report regarding the

implementation of the Department for Education new school funding arrangements from 1st April 2013.

It was reported that whilst local authorities would continue to be allocated amounts for each pupil through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) based on previous funding levels, from April 2013 DSG funding would be allocated in the following notional blocks which would not be ring-fenced and would be based on planned spend by local authorities in 2012-13:

- Schools Block;
- Early Years Block, and;
- High Needs Block.

With regard to the schools block it was noted that Lancashire's current formula had 27 factors which were taken into consideration as part of the funding formula whereas the Government's simplified formula would only allow 12 factors.

Mr Edwards informed the meeting that a consultation on the proposed funding arrangements had been undertaken in June 2012 and had received a significant response rate of 89%. Details of the implications of the new funding arrangements were presented and the following points were raised.

- a) Concern was expressed regarding the proposals in relation to funding for pupils with high needs which was felt would lead to funding previously targeted at specific pupils who had statements of SEN being delegated to all schools. As a result it was felt that schools and academies with a significantly higher than average number of statements (particularly in bands A to D) would lose funding though it was recognised that others with below average statements or no statements would gain.
- b) It was recognised that in Lancashire some schools had a high proportion of children from service families and the current formula provided targeted funding based on the numbers of pupils on roll who were identified as such. However, the new national formula did not have a service children factor and it was felt that this would cause significant turbulence for those schools which educate a large number of service children.
- c) It was reported that the current formula provided targeted funding to schools based on the numbers of pupils on roll drawn from identified Minority Ethnic Communities whose attainment was overall below average. However, as the new national formula would provide funding based on identified pupils with English as an Additional Language who have been in the school system for three years this would target funding at a different group of children and young people.

In considering the matter the Committee noted that the issue was particularly acute in the secondary sector where some schools in East Lancashire would have the number of eligible pupils reduce from over 500 to less than 40 and whilst the minimum funding guarantee would ensure

that funding was not lost in a single year there would be year on year reductions.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools, together with the Schools Forum, had submitted representations to the Department for education regarding the concerns mentioned above and in respect of other aspects of the new funding arrangements as set out in the report presented.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted
2. That both the Schools Forum and Officers in the Children and Young People Directorate be congratulated on the detailed and extensive work which has been done to date in terms of providing schools with information and support in relation to the proposed funding arrangements.

9. Urgent Business

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

10. Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at 10.00am on the 16th January 2013 in Cabinet Room 'C' when consideration would be given to the education related elements of the County Councils budget for 2013/14.

As reported earlier in the meeting the subsequent scheduled meeting would now be held at 2.00pm on Tuesday the 12th March 2013 in Cabinet Room 'D', County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston