

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 21 October, 2014 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Cynthia Dereli (Chair)

County Councillors

P Buckley	K Iddon
Mrs S Charles	B Murray
C Crompton	S Perkins
B Dawson	M Perks
Dr M Hassan	C Wakeford*
C Henig	

Co-opted members

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

*County Councillor Christian Wakeford attended in place of County Councillor Anne Cheetham for this meeting.

New Member

The Chair welcomed Mr Ian Beck, new co-opted member to the Committee, representing Roman Catholic Schools, in place of Miss Theresa Jones who had resigned her position.

The Chair requested that a letter be sent to Miss Jones, on behalf of the Committee, thanking her for her contribution.

1. Apologies

Apologies were presented on behalf of County Councillor Dorothy Lord.

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 15 July 2014

The minutes from the meeting held on 15 July 2015 were presented and agreed. In presenting the minutes the Chair noted that contributions to the discussion were not attributed to a particular speaker and that this style was in keeping with normal practice.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Lancashire School Term and Holiday Arrangements from 2016/17

The report was presented by Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services, and Margaret Scrivens, Liaison and Compliance Manager, both from the Directorate for Children and Young People. It provided the background to the current school holiday arrangements and possible future arrangements, and a summary of the responses received from key groups regarding the future arrangements for the Lancashire School Term and Holidays.

The Committee was informed that since the report had been published feedback had also been received from LASSH (Lancashire Association of Secondary School Headteachers) who had indicated that their preference was for the county council to continue to provide the framework for school term and holiday arrangements from 2016/17. They had indicated a preference also for part weeks to be avoided, which could sometimes lead to children's non-attendance.

The overwhelming response to soundings taken from representative groups was for the authority to continue to provide a framework for schools.

The assumption, in cases where no response had been received, was that those parties were content that the county council continued the practice of negotiating and agreeing a framework with the recognised Teacher Associations based on the principles of the Standard School Year. Church School representatives present at the meeting concurred with this view.

Resolved: That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the continued practice of Lancashire County Council negotiating and agreeing a framework with the recognised Teacher Associations and Diocesan/Church Authorities based on the principles of the Standard School Year, and that this approach be commended to all Lancashire schools.

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

The report, presented by Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement, Directorate for Children and Young People, set out the overall attainment in Lancashire schools at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2014. It 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.

Jonathan explained in some detail the difficulties that would result from changes to the reporting arrangements made by the Department for Education (DfE); first entry exam results rather than best entry results would be used in performance tables in future. This could result in significant changes to some schools, not just those facing challenging circumstances. Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations) had already written to schools warning of substantial changes in their performance data. It was expected that both measures (first entry and best entry) would be used in the published data to enable comparison with previous years and that Lancashire's position would be in line with the trend nationally.

The Committee was assured that much work was ongoing with low attaining schools to ensure that action plans were in place to tackle issues, and there was particular focus on certain groups of young people including those in receipt of free school meals.

Members raised a number of comments and questions and the main points arising during the discussion are summarised below:

- It was confirmed that schools which had hitherto entered students into exams during the Autumn term might well now change their exam entry policy in order to achieve the best possible outcome for themselves in the performance league tables.
- In response to a question about the county council's ability to continue to support low attaining schools, the Committee was assured that Lancashire County Council had a strong support system based on a traditional model, which neighbouring authorities also recognised was highly successful and which they were keen to use. There was confidence that the county council's improvement services were robust.
- It was considered most important that focus continued on the achievements of children and young people in receipt of free school meals. The Committee was informed that indications were that results were improving and that the gap between those in receipt of free school meals and others was narrowing. Whilst the results reflected a positive picture there was still much work to do. The Committee had considered the report of the Pupil Premium and Attainment Task Group at its last meeting in July and it had been agreed to regard the report as a 'living' document; the Cabinet Member's final response to the task group's recommendations would be presented at the next meeting in March 2015 and there would be an opportunity to consider this specific issue further at that point.

- It was confirmed that schools had been forewarned about the new reporting arrangements for exam results, however Key Stage 2 courses tended to be 2 – 3 years in duration and at the time of notification young people will have already been part way through their courses. Governing bodies had faced a difficult decision regarding the best approach to take, for their pupils or for their position in the league tables.
- There was some concern that young people were not accessing mental health services, especially in the east of the county. It was explained that analysis was difficult given the linkages to other factors such as domestic violence. More detailed analysis would be possible by early 2015 which would provide a clearer picture and enable support to be targeted to families most at risk.
- The Committee was informed that primary schools were responding well to changes in the curriculum and there was a clear understanding of the high expectations for 11 year olds. Currently a high proportion of children at KS2 were achieving a good level 4.
- Information about results for Children Looked After would be provided to this Committee after it had been shared with the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board. It was noted that there was a related item listed on the work plan for the next meeting of this Committee in March 2015.
- Details about validated data for individual schools or groups of schools could be discussed with individual members outside this meeting on request. A web link to validated data would be provided when available via which members would be able to access much information.

Resolved: That,

- i. Officers be thanked for all their work around attainment in Lancashire schools.
- ii. Validated data relating to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 attainment be sent, via a link, to members of this Committee when available;
- iii. A further report on validated Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 attainment be provided to this Committee at its next meeting in March.

6. A summary of partnership arrangements amongst Lancashire schools.

The report was presented by Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services, and Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement, both from the Directorate for Children and Young People. It explained that there was a wide range of partnerships between schools in Lancashire which were invaluable in helping schools to improve the quality of education they provided and these partnerships were constantly evolving to meet new challenges and opportunities.

The report outlined the purpose and range of school partnership arrangements across Lancashire. It also set out the local authority's strategies to promote partnership working between schools.

Members were reassured by all the arrangements in place. Officers confirmed that work was currently ongoing with the LASGB (Lancashire Association for School Governing Bodies) to build on an already strong relationship and to provide a website which shared good practice.

It was recognised that a target driven model could inhibit partnerships between schools, especially those who might be competing for the same children.

Transition from primary to secondary school had been recognised as a key issue and that there needed to be a shared understanding about expectations. Pastoral care was very strong, but transition around the curriculum less so.

Resolved: That,

- i. Officers be thanked for their report;
- ii. The importance of partnership working and the ongoing good work in this connection be recognised; and
- iii. The importance of peer to peer support for school governors be recognised and work to improve support for governors be welcomed.

7. Work Plan 2014/15

Appendix A to the report now presented set out a draft work plan for the Education Scrutiny Committee, including current Task Group reviews.

The Chair reported that, owing to limited resources, no progress had yet been made towards the establishment of a task group to investigate issues around emotional health and wellbeing of young people as a barrier to learning. She was, however, confident that progress could be achieved in a different way; members agreed with her suggestion that she and the deputy chair of this Committee meet with representatives of the Youth Council with a view to achieving an ongoing relationship, for example through regularly providing the minutes of this Committee to the Youth Council and considering how best to receive information from them. This approach might enable the Committee to address issues on mental health, which had been raised earlier in this meeting and was a major area of concern for the Youth Council also. Members were reminded that there was also soon to be a bite size briefing about the Youth Council.

It was noted that a full and final response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to the Pupil Premium and Attainment Task Group was to be presented to the next meeting in March 2015. In the meantime an interim response from the Cabinet Member would be circulated to members via email.

It was suggested that greater clarity in terms of the relationship between this Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board would be helpful in achieving shared objectives. It was agreed that consideration be given to how relevant relationships could be addressed and better aligned.

It was recognised that responsibility for the curriculum rested with headteachers and governing bodies, but there was concern that subjects such as music, culture, performing arts and sport, which contribute to mental wellbeing, were becoming less prevalent on school timetables. It was suggested that a report on good practice be brought to this Committee at a future date, yet to be agreed.

It was noted that 14-19 education was listed as a future topic and it was agreed that this item be listed for the July 2015 meeting. It was suggested that skills and other alternative provision, for example apprenticeships, be included as part of this report.

Resolved: That the workplan, as now updated above, be noted.

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 24 March 2015, at 10:00am, County Hall, Preston.

I Young
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston