

## **Lancashire County Council**

### **Education Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 24 March, 2015 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	C Henig
Mrs S Charles	A Kay
A Cheetham	B Murray
C Crompton	S Perkins

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

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

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were presented on behalf of County Councillor Dr Misfar Hassan and Mr Fred Kershaw (representative for Church of England schools).

#### **New Member**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Andrea Kay as a new, permanent member to the Committee, in place of County Councillor Mark Perks.

#### **Guests**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Sue Prynn, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, who was attending to speak on item 6, The Achievement of Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA) in 2014, and with the agreement of the Committee was invited to contribute to other items also.

She also welcomed members of the Youth Council, Josh Connor and Emily Holt and officers from the Directorate for Children and Young People:

- Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services
- Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement
- Kirsty Houghton, Youth Council Development Worker

- Frances Molloy, School Attendance Lead

## **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 21 October 2014**

The minutes from the meeting held on 21 October 2014 were presented and agreed.

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

## **4. Pupil Premium Task Group final response**

County Councillor Mathew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People was not able to attend this meeting owing to another commitment and the report was therefore presented on his behalf by Bob Stott and Jonathan Hewitt.

The report explained that, at its meeting on 16 July 2013, the Education Scrutiny Committee had resolved to establish a task group to explore the issues on the Educational Attainment of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals and begin to identify possible actions. The report of the Task Group was presented to the Education Scrutiny Committee on 15 July 2014 with a number of recommendations.

The report now presented provided evidence of the good work that was being carried out by schools across Lancashire to raise the achievement of pupils eligible for Free School Meals and a number of examples of good practice were cited. The good progress made in the Early Years and the Primary phase was recognised. It was, however, a concern that the performance of pupils eligible for Free School Meals in Lancashire at the end of Key Stage 4 remained below the national average for this group of pupils and well below those from more advantaged backgrounds.

The Cabinet Member had asked that his thanks be passed to the Education Scrutiny Committee for their report on this important issue and his response to the individual recommendations was set out in the report now presented.

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

- A question was raised about vulnerable children, not in the care of Lancashire County Council, but in the care of outside bodies resident within Lancashire; it was suggested that, because of a failure within social services, those children

sometimes find their transition from primary school to secondary school is not confirmed which causes the child unease. It was explained that there was now a national protocol to ensure that the receiving authority was formally notified about such placements including information about the individual's particular needs. Additionally each local authority was to publish basic information about local services and key contacts. Advance notification would also help give an improved transition from primary to high school. Members were asked to report any specific examples of concern.

- In response to a question about work ongoing with district councils to help ensure that as many children as possible benefit from the Pupil Premium Grant, it was explained that it was a very complex picture; the county council was working with districts to identify families and to ensure that they were aware that they could claim. Schools themselves were using some innovative ideas to get information to families.

**Resolved:** That,

- i. Officers be thanked for the report;
- ii. The report be noted; and
- iii. A further update report be provided in twelve months, to include:
  - information about progress with schools where there are community or locality barriers to achievement,
  - information about progress regarding the longer term objectives in response to the Task Group's recommendations; and
  - Achievements for this cohort of students.

## **5. Provision of Information and Guidance (IAG) to young people**

The report, presented by Bob Stott provided the background to the current position regarding information and guidance (IAG) across schools and also the services provided to targeted vulnerable groups.

It explained that Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education published in March 2012 (and updated in March 2013 and April 2014) placed a statutory duty on schools that required governing bodies to ensure that all registered pupils at the school be provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 (12-13 year olds) to year 13 (17-18 year olds).

The Chair again welcomed Josh Connor and Emily Holt from the Youth Council. She reminded members that representatives from the Youth Council had attended a previous meeting of this Committee in July 2014 at which it had been agreed that a task group be established to investigate issues around emotional health and wellbeing of young people as a barrier to learning, and to support the work of the Youth Council in this connection. She explained that it had not been possible to progress this owing to limited resources, however, there remained a desire to develop a relationship between this Committee and the Youth Council and to involve them more in matters that came before it. She encouraged

representatives from the Youth Council to attend as many meetings as they wished to in the future.

Josh explained that the Youth Council had produced a report on careers advice and guidance provision for 14 -16 year olds in Lancashire. The report had been circulated to all members of the Committee and a copy is attached to these minutes. He emphasised how important it was for young people to receive careers advice, however they had found that the quality and consistency of provision varied between schools and was something of a 'postcode lottery'.

He referred the Committee to four recommendations contained within the Youth Council's report:

"The Lancashire Youth Council strongly believes that the provision of careers advice and guidance should be of a high quality throughout the district. At present, the youth council is failing to see consistency around the county. In order to combat this and ensure that all young people are able to access high quality careers advice and guidance, we would strongly suggest the following recommendations to improve careers advice and guidance vastly:

- 1) There is a lot more emphasis on local businesses to deliver talks to students about career pathways.
- 2) More one to one support for all young people in terms of careers advice and guidance.
- 3) Young people receive advice on grades required to access further education courses, university courses, careers and jobs - including specific qualifications required.
- 4) More provision online to support careers advice and guidance."

Bob Stott suggested that the Youth Council's report be published on the school's portal for head teachers and also that he present it to the LASH (Lancashire Association of Head Teachers) executive group.

It was felt that careers advice was just part of a much bigger picture and that early support to build self-esteem and aspiration was very important. The Committee was assured that emphasis on personal development was strong in most schools; Ofsted also recognised the importance of social, moral and cultural support.

It was acknowledged also that a wide range of different courses could give a young person the opportunity to shine and thus grow in confidence. There was a feeling that the national approach, which put more emphasis on exams rather than coursework, was not helpful and schools were currently being measured by a set of indicators that was too narrow.

It was acknowledged that young people tend to obtain much information on line, it was suggested however that there was merit sometimes in face to face conversations and talking to employers directly. Josh welcomed a suggestion that the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Council could be most useful in

drawing people together and he undertook to take this idea back to the Youth Council's executive meeting.

It was explained that funding accessed from European Social Funds had been used to provide educational training to improve young people's access to the job market. Most of this training was run by further education colleges and some were foundation courses linking into apprenticeships; this was a positive approach in keeping the number of youngsters NEET (not in employment, education or training) from rising. Bob Stott undertook to try to find out how many youngsters went on to secure long-term employment following training provided by this funding.

**Resolved:** That,

- i. Officers and the Youth Council be thanked for their reports;
- ii. The importance of IAG and the difficulty in delivering a standard offer in current circumstances be recognised;
- iii. Officers be asked to circulate the report of the Youth Council as appropriate;
- iv. The report of the Youth Council be formally presented to the July 2015 meeting of this Committee, focusing in particular on the four recommendations;
- v. A report be provided by officers setting out the response from the County Council and relevant partners to the Youth Council's recommendations.

## **6. The achievement of Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA) in 2014**

The report presented by Bob Stott and Jonathan Hewitt provided information on the attainment, progress and achievements of Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA) in 2014. The findings were based on the unvalidated data released by the DfE (Department for Education) along with local authority information on CLA. The data showed that there were improvements in achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 but achievement for CLA remained well below that of other pupils in Lancashire.

At the end of Key Stage 4 the information indicated that levels of attainment fell in 2014 and were very low when compared with other pupils. A recovery plan had been developed and was being implemented to help raise standards of achievement for CLA pupils in the secondary phase and particularly at the end of Key Stage 4.

It was felt that focus should not be only on attainment but also on progress. It was pointed out to the Committee that two thirds of CLA had some form of special educational need and also that it was not a fixed cohort as children move in and out of care throughout the year. It was acknowledged that more needed to be done to help these young people reach their full potential and this was a key area of work. The Committee was informed that a new head teacher for Looked After children had been appointed from 1 April 2015.

The Chair invited County Councillor Sue Prynn, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board to speak. She welcomed the work that had already been done on the Recovery Plan noting that the DfE had acknowledged that there was a range of inter-dependant factors which affected this cohort of young people.

She expressed concern about the number of CLA who were moved whilst in school years ten and eleven, which seriously affected their GCSE examination results. She said that there was evidence to show that, following such a move at this stage of education results dip significantly, and the move was the biggest determining factor. She asked for measures to be put in place to avoid moves and to consider what more could be done to improve placement stability. Officers agreed that it was imperative to avoid unnecessary moves, but pointed out that there would sometimes be factors that would override the need to avoid a move; it was a difficult balance.

She felt that a greater proportion of CLA were placed in lower attaining schools. She acknowledged that it was important for CLA to be placed near their family and social group, but it was important also to ensure that the County Council was doing its best for their education. It was important therefore to consider the attainment levels of the schools in which CLA were placed. The Chair noted that the report had identified, as a priority, the placement of CLA in good or better schools wherever possible and appropriate, but pointed out that often there were many, complex factors which needed to be considered.

County Councillor Prynn said that evidence showed one-to-one tuition would often achieve improved results and whilst she acknowledged that there were resource pressures, she suggested that schools should consider ways in which it could allocate Pupil Premium funding to provide a more innovative approach. Officers agreed that extra-curricular activities were important in building confidence and self-esteem and providing an opportunity for youngsters to shine. The Pupil Premium education provision map would enable the officers to see how schools were using the money.

County Councillor Prynn noted that a significant number of CLA had special educational needs and that many had also been subject to abuse and neglect, and consequently suffered trauma and attachment issues. She said that against that background it was difficult for them to learn and operate cognitively in an educational environment. She asked that consideration be given to how best to support SENCOs (special educational needs co-ordinators) and other relevant professionals to enable them to support CLA and address how emotional factors affected low attainment. Officers agreed that self-esteem and wellbeing needed to be strong for young people to get the best from education.

Concern was expressed about young people placed on remand by the courts into the care of the local authority and the need for all relevant agencies to work closely together to ensure that any further report provided back to the court, or other body, be as full and up to date as possible otherwise the young person's life could be unduly blighted. Officers acknowledged that this was an important issue that would be added to the action plan.

The Chair suggested that the head teacher for CLA be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to discuss the particular areas of concern that had been raised.

**Resolved:** That,

- i. Officers be thanked for their report;
- ii. The head teacher for Looked After and Vulnerable Children be invited to a future meeting of this Committee
- iii. That a report be provided which addressed the particular concerns raised:
  - That consideration be given to improve placement stability;
  - That CLA be placed in schools rated good or better wherever possible;
  - That schools be more innovative in their use of Pupil Premium funding;
  - That consideration be given to how best to support SENCOs and other relevant professionals to enable them to support CLA and address emotional factors affecting low attainment;
  - The need to strengthen partnerships between schools and other agencies such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and transport providers;
  - The need to support and signpost foster carers to available resources; and
  - That there be a greater emphasis on progress rather than achievement.

## **7. School attendance of pupils in Lancashire and the rate of exclusion from school**

The report presented by Frances Molloy, School Attendance Lead, Directorate for Children and Young People, outlined the most recent attendance and exclusion figures for primary, secondary and special schools in Lancashire, with national comparators. The attendance data included overall and persistent absence figures and a ranking in relation to statistical neighbours. For each of the areas of attendance and exclusion there was a brief summary of support for schools, and in the case of attendance this included support for families.

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

- It was emphasised that young people were never excluded from school because they had mental health issues; it was behaviour which would lead to such a decision, however, it was acknowledged that behaviour could well be linked to mental health, in which case such difficulties would be addressed in an appropriate way.
- It was confirmed that some schools have dedicated units for children in need of support and there was also a range of mechanisms for managing the sort of behaviour which could affect the smooth running of the school.

Relationships with families were a key part of this and, unfortunately some families were not able to provide their child(ren) with the necessary security and emotional wellbeing which could in turn lead to very challenging behaviour. It was more difficult for small schools to provide the resources to manage challenging behaviour.

- It was felt that in some cases external pressures would influence a decision to exclude a child.
- Schools were positive about working with the county council in exploring the most effective ways of supporting schools in order to help prevent exclusions.
- Regarding special schools, it was explained that pupils could have profound and complex difficulties and absence from school was sometimes an inevitable consequence. The Committee was assured that there were links into hospital education and other provision to ensure that children with medical conditions could still access education.
- One member reported a very successful school 'walking bus' which had targeted those children with family issues and which had dramatically improved attendance. It was suggested that such examples of good practice be published on the schools portal.
- It was acknowledged that the child could be empowered to effectively reach out to the parent(s) responsible for getting them up and ready for school.
- It was explained, by way of clarification, that reference in the report to publish an offer which clearly outlined the expectations of schools and Lancashire services in relation to supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs was essentially a restatement of what was already in place; it was more about ensuring that it was all in one place.
- It was explained that the world was changing to the extent that a number of children, some as young as four, were finding it difficult to cope in school, as a result schools were facing new challenges and the need to adapt their approach.
- It was reported that there was now less training in behaviour management strategies for newly qualified teachers, which was not helpful.
- It was felt also that the provision of free nursery education was leading to some unintended consequences as some parents appeared to be using the provision as a babysitting service and neglecting their responsibility to nurture and prepare their child for school.

**Resolved:** That,

- i. Officers be thanked for their report and for the work being done to address school attendance ; and
- ii. A further update report be provided in twelve months.



## **8. Validated GCSE Data**

The following link through which validated GCSE data for 2013/14 could be accessed was provided for information:

[Performance Tables - The Department for Education - School and College](#)

**Resolved:** That it be noted that a link through which validated GCSE data for 2013/14 could be accessed had been provided.

## **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 on Tuesday 21 July 2015, at 10:00am, County Hall, Preston.

I Young  
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall  
Preston