

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
5 MARCH 2014
7.30 - 9.50 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), Brossard, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Temperton and Thompson

Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Heydon and Kensall

Reverend Canon Parish, Church of England (Oxford Diocese)

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Kashif Nawaz, EMTAS Team Leader
Bob Welch, Chief Adviser: Learning & Achievement

50. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Thompson for Councillor Heydon

51. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Panel held on 15 January 2014 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

- The feedback session on the Children's Society Consultation with Bracknell Forest's Children and Young People had been particularly informative and a full report would be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

52. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest nor any indications that Members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

53. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

54. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

55. Quarterly Service Report

Bob Welch, Chief Adviser, gave a presentation in respect of the work taking place to improve school standards. The presentation included an overview of the national and local improvement context, the legislative framework, the role of the Council's School Adviser Service, school to school support and an overview of the Authority's powers of intervention.

Under the new Ofsted inspection regime all schools were expected to be 'Good' and the requirements to achieve a rating of 'Good' were now much more onerous than they had been previously. Any Bracknell Forest school graded as either 'Requiring Improvement' or 'Inadequate' was helped to develop a detailed Statement of Action which was subsequently made public. The Panel would continue to consider Ofsted inspection outcomes at future meetings.

Nationally schools had raised concerns over the varying interpretations that different Ofsted Inspection Teams had given to the new Inspection Framework and this had been raised with the Department of Education. Inspectors were now placing greater emphasis on the evidence base used by schools and it was crucial that all schools had a robust, up to date, easily accessible evidence base regardless of whether they were expecting an inspection. There were currently no national strategies for school improvement and schools were able to choose where they obtained guidance on improving standards from. To assist schools with this the School Advisers were identifying those school staff with expertise in particular areas and encouraging other schools to use them as sources of support and information for example the New Curriculum. School Advisers also met with Head Teachers on a termly basis to provide support and all schools were affiliated to local cluster groups.

Nationally there was anecdotal concern that academies weren't always being given the support or challenge that was required to drive improvement however Bracknell Forest's maintained schools valued the support and challenge that they received from the Local Authority and consequently there was little pressure from school governing bodies to convert to academies.

Locally feedback on schools was encouraged and there were a number of ways that this could be done for example through the Parent Complaint Line. All contacts were logged and analysed so that any trends could be identified and investigated. Social networks and professional forums were also monitored.

The Panel considered the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the Children, Young People and Learning Department for the third quarter of 2013/14 (September to December 2013) and arising from the Panel's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- There were currently 9 agency social workers working with the Council to fill staff vacancies. However this number varied according to need and there

was a strong core of social workers employed by the Council. Future QSRs would include a narrative putting staff vacancy rates into context and identifying the number of agency staff employed during the quarter

- The recruitment of experienced social workers was a national problem and a range of options was being explored to ascertain how this problem might be solved at a local level for example through the development of a specific social work micro-site that would enable people to express an interest in working in Bracknell Forest and looking at pay and conditions to make working in Bracknell Forest more attractive
- There had been a number of staff signed off on long term sick leave during the quarter reported and this had impacted on the staff sickness rates
- A member who had attended the recent SILSIP workshop congratulated the looked after young people who had given a presentation at the event about their lives
- The contract to provide targeted support to young carers was for very specialised work and this limited the number of companies able to bid for the contract
- The recruitment of additional foster carers was a key priority for 2014/15 and it was hoped that a further four fostering families would receive final approval by the end of May
- The cost of providing foster care ranged from between £300 a week for in house fostering to £3,500 a week for specialised residential care. However the cost did depend heavily on the individual needs of the child
- There were currently 11 children in residential placements and these settings were tightly monitored on a monthly basis. It was agreed that a narrative of summarising the numbers of children in each type of placement would be included in future QSRs
- Past Aiming High open events had proved to be particularly educational and members were encouraged to attend these when they could

The Panel thanked officers for their informative updates.

56. **Bracknell Forest Strategy for 'Narrowing the Gap'**

The Panel received a report containing an update on the Council's draft strategy for 'Narrowing the Gap' in performance between children and young people eligible for the Pupil Premium and their peers who were not prior to its approval by the Executive.

The Pupil Premium was additional funding given to publicly funded schools to support their disadvantaged children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Introduced in April 2011, Pupil Premium was allocated to schools to work with pupils who had been registered for free school meals at any point within the last six years. Additional Pupil Premium was also received for children who had been looked after continuously for more than six months, for adopted children and for children of service personnel. The Premium was paid directly to schools and it was for the schools to decide how to use the additional funding that they received.

It was acknowledged that from September 2014 when all Key Stage 1 children became eligible for free school meals it would become more difficult to identify those children eligible for Pupil Premium and that there was a risk that schools might lose funding as a result. It was therefore vital that schools were proactive in ensuring that parents understood the need to register their child under the previous requirements in order to secure additional funding for the school.

It was agreed that the action plan associated with the draft strategy would be expanded to address transition issues such as recommending that actions leading to successful outcomes at primary level were continued when pupils transferred to secondary school. The presentation would be circulated and further consideration would be given to successful outcomes and the way that schools spent their Pupil Premium at a future Panel meeting.

57. Support for English as an Additional Language

Kashif Nawaz gave an update in respect of the support provided by the Council to Children for whom English was an additional language (EAL).

It was reported that between 2009 and 2013 the numbers of children who were classified as having EAL had risen from 8.4% to 11% in the Borough's primary schools and 6.3% to 7.6% in the Borough's secondary schools and over 80 separate languages had been recorded as being a first language.

Support for those children who were known to have EAL was provided by the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS). A team which worked inclusively across all key stages tailoring the support provided to each child's individual needs.

Arising from the Panel's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The ideal situation was that those children identified as having EAL became English proficient so that they eventually did not need additional support
- A child was considered as being able to access the National Curriculum if they had achieved a SAT level 2B in English
- Since September 2013 EMTAS had received 117 new referrals with the majority relating to children arriving from the new EU accession countries
- Over the years there had been a growing trend for EAL students to stay on in Bracknell Forest schools for their sixth form education and currently 1 in 5 sixth form students had EAL
- EMTAS aimed to carry out initial language assessments within three school days of receiving a school's referral form
- Officers working in EMTAS were able to communicate in 9 different languages. Additional language support was available from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and a pool of EAL Sixth Former volunteers was available to draw on

The Panel thanked Kashif Nawaz for his update.

58. Children Missing from Education

The Panel received a report setting out the policies and procedures that had been adopted locally to systematically identify children who may be missing from education so that appropriate educational provision might be made for them.

It was agreed that any comments on the policy would be forwarded to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning prior to its determination by the Executive. The Panel would give further consideration to the policy at a future meeting.

59. Education Transport Policies

The Panel received the draft Mainstream Education Transport Policy 2015/16 and Post 16 Transport Policy 2014/15. Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- At mainstream secondary school level it could be considered impractical for a member of school staff to collect a child from a vehicle and take the child to the vehicle and the Director of Children, Young People and Learning agreed to reconsider this aspect of the policy
- The assessment of students with special educational needs changed when a student reached year 12
- It was requested that any further comments on the draft policies be forwarded to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning for consideration

60. Working Groups Update Report

The Panel noted a report providing a summary of working group activity since its last meeting.

It was hoped that the Report of the School Places Working Group would be ready for the Panel's June meeting.

It was agreed that Councillors Mrs Birch and Mrs Temperton and Miss V Richardson and Mr R Briscoe would participate in the proposed Substance Misuse Working Group Review. A presentation giving an overview of substance misuse would be given at the Panel's June meeting.

61. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

CHAIRMAN