

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
4 MARCH 2015
7.30 - 9.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Gbadebo, Heydon, Mrs Temperton and Thompson
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Hayes, Kensall and Mrs McCracken
Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative
Mrs L Wellsteed, Parent Governor Representative

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Sonia Johnson, Head of Specialist Services
Christine McInnes, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement
Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
Councillor Ian Leake

48. Substitute Members

Councillor Thompson substituted for Councillor Ms Hayes.

49. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12 January 2015 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

50. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

51. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

52. Public Participation

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

53. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel - 10 December 2014

The Panel received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) held on 10 December 2014.

Arising from questions raised, the Panel noted:

- The Larchwood Short Break Unit had recently received a further visit from Ofsted Inspectors following the 'Outstanding' grading received at the last full inspection.
- There was a natural turnover in foster carers available to the Council which meant that it was necessary to try and recruit around ten new foster carers each year. Efforts were continuing to re-launch the Foster Carers' Association to provide support for those who volunteered for fostering.
- Support was given to children remaining in foster care in the event that sibling groups were split due to adoption.

54. Quarterly Service Report

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the third quarter of 2014/15 (October to December 2014) relating to Children, Young People and Learning. The Panel also received a copy of the presentation slides shown at the recent Members Development Seminar on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

From the comprehensive QSR, the Panel noted the following key messages:

- The current head teacher recruitment exercise was proceeding very satisfactorily. Six new heads had been appointed, having been selected from a strong pool of applicants. A further three posts, each at a different stage in the recruitment process, had yet to be filled. A number of the appointments comprised deputy heads already teaching in the Borough, reflecting the success of development work offered to staff by the Council. An update in respect of head teacher recruitment would be provided at the June 2015 Panel meeting.
- 'Adopt Berkshire' working across four Berkshire Boroughs was launched on 1 December 2014 and formally endorsed on 26 February 2015, to encourage and support Adoption Services.
- A strong focus on school improvement was being made through use of the Pupil Premium. Attention was centred on school leadership and governance, quality teaching and the work of the Executive Headteachers, and a sharper focus on performance data.
- CSE was a key area for further focus, having been the subject of recent Member briefings. It had become a topic of major national and local interest following reviews in Oxfordshire, Manchester, Rochdale and Rotherham.
- Phase 1 of the Department for Communities and Local Government Troubled Families initiative had been successfully completed and the Authority was on an early starter for Phase 2.

With particular reference to school improvement, the Panel was informed of the programme of work with primary school leaders to address performance issues. A paper was tabled detailing the Ofsted Inspection outcomes for schools in reports published up to March 2015. Recent Ofsted reports had included heavy criticisms of

school governing bodies, notwithstanding the role of a school governor was a voluntary one. Guidance notes on the issues raised had been circulated for the assistance of schools, particularly those preparing for an inspection. Ofsted was also reviewing in detail the gap between the attainment by pupils generally and those attracting the pupil premium, with a view to checking how well the pupil premium was being used to close this gap.

With reference to CSE, the Panel was informed of the work of the Operational Group, a multi-agency group of professionals formed specifically to aid the prediction and prevention of children who may be at risk of exploitation in the area. The Group met on a monthly basis, reviewing the cases of about 20 children each month, involving a range of people to engage with them and ensuring that sufficient actions were in place to reduce risk. All children were subject to a sexual exploitation risk assessment (SERA) which graded them from Level 1 to Level 3 (the most serious concern/level of risk). In Bracknell Forest there were currently 4 cases at Level 1; 2 cases at Level 2; and 2 cases at Level 3. Referrals to the Operational Group were most commonly through schools but some came now through engagement with young people themselves. Members' attention was drawn to the 'Quick Guide' to identify the risk indicators for CSE.

The Panel received responses to their numerous questions and comments relating to head teacher recruitment, Ofsted inspections and CSE before thanking officers for their informative updates and congratulating all those concerned in the good work taking place.

55. **Virtual Schools Annual Report**

The Panel considered the Annual Report on the work of the Virtual School covering the period for the academic year 2013 – 2014. The Virtual School had been established with the remit to ensure that Looked After Children received appropriate education and achieved well.

The report set out the vision and values for the Virtual School, the multi agency approach adopted and the impact and achievements during 2013 – 14. Every Looked After Child was required to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which was closely monitored. The report went on to cover the support for Looked After Children through transition to adoption and the work with care leavers.

The Panel asked a number of questions for clarification of certain points, noted with satisfaction the scenarios contained in the various case studies in the Annual Report, and extended their congratulations to all concerned with the progress and achievements during the year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the work of the Virtual School be noted.

56. **Pupil Premium**

The Panel considered an update on the Bracknell Forest strategy on the use of the Pupil Premium (PP) funding for the first six months of the academic year 2014 – 15.

The PP grant was additional funding given to publicly funded schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils from reception to year 11 and close the gap between them and their peers. PP funding was paid for any child registered for free school meals (at any point in the past 6 years), for children who have been looked after for more than one day, adopted from care or under special guardianship, and children of service personnel.

A presentation to the Panel detailed the funding allocation, which totalled over £3.1m for Bracknell Forest in 2014/15. It also illustrated the national and local picture on results at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 2 for all pupils compared to those attracting PP, and the percentage gap. A strategy had been put in place designed to coordinate actions to close this gap and a number of examples of successful actions were given. This included specific work with those schools identified with the biggest gap, where School Improvement Team advisers, for instance, were able to spend more time with school leadership teams. A diagram showing an overview of value for money compared the cost per pupil of the measures available to the effect/impact of those measures was noted. However, it remained most important and fundamental to provide really good teaching in the classroom. Measures to encourage application for free school meals, which triggered the PP grant, were explained.

The Panel noted the report and presentation.

57. Annual Admissions Arrangement

The report on the Annual Admissions Arrangement for 2016/17 was in preparation, due for submission to the Executive Member by the end of March 2015, and would be circulated to Panel Members thereafter.

58. School Places Plan 2015-2020

The Panel received the School Places Plan 2014 – 2019. The Panel noted the continuing trend of increasing pupil numbers, the progress made against the Plan, and welcomed the assurance that a school place continues to be available for every child in the Borough who wants one.

59. Education Transport Policies

The mainstream Education Transport Policy 2016/17 and the Post 16 policy 2015/16 were in preparation, due for submission to the Executive Member by the end of March 2015, and would be circulated to Panel Members thereafter.

60. Draft Substance Misuse Overview and Scrutiny Working Group Report

The Panel considered a draft report presenting the Review of Substance Misuse Involving Children and Young People, undertaken by a working group of the Panel.

The Panel noted that the report was presented as an early draft, with a number of sections yet to be added, in order that its comments could be received before the end of the municipal year and the elections. The Chairman thanked the Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny) for her work in bringing the draft report to this stage and the Working Group members for their time and contribution.

The Panel endorsed the content and recommendations in the draft report and made the following suggestions for additions:

- A list could usefully be included describing the chain of operation and the roles of the individuals involved in substance misuse treatment.
- Recommendation 6.2 could be extended to refer to awareness raising via video, online and social media as well as informative booklets.

RESOLVED that the draft report be finalised by the Working Group, taking account of the comments made, for submission to the relevant Executive Members for a response.

61. **Children and Families Act 2014**

The Panel noted that the main provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014 would come into effect from April 2015. Some information about the implementation of the Act had been covered in various reports and a Members briefing.

RESOLVED that if further briefing about new provisions in the Act is required, for example relating to special educational needs, then a briefing note be circulated directly to Members and/or be included in the agenda of the meeting of the Panel in June 2015.

62. **Executive Key and Non-key Decisions**

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

CHAIRMAN