



**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 29 March 2011 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Gladbaum (Chair) and Councillors Aden, Harrison, Oladapo, HM Patel, Mrs Hawra Imame, Ms J Cooper, Mrs L Gouldbourne and Brent Youth Parliament representatives.

Also Present: Councillors Arnold (Lead Member for Children and Families), Councillor Butt (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Finance and Corporate Resources) and Councillor John OBE (Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Corporate Strategy and Policy Co-ordination).

Apologies were received from: Councillors Hector, Dr Levison and Ms C Jolinon.

1. Declaration of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 10 February 2011

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 February 2011 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the following amendment:-

page 1, under 'PRESENT', add 'Mrs L Gouldbourne'.

3. Matters arising (if any)

Brent Youth Parliament update

The committee received an update from Brent Youth Parliament representatives. Members heard that following a consultation which included pupils of Brent schools, the next two year project had been chosen and this would focus on increasing political awareness of young people in the borough. This would include issues such as giving young people a voice to be heard and increasing interest and participation in voting and a recent Brent Youth Parliament session had also focused on encouraging young people to register to vote. Brent Youth Parliament representatives had visited the House of Commons on 9 March and had met with the Speaker of the Commons. The event presented the opportunity for Youth Parliaments of London boroughs to share information. Another area of work Brent Youth Parliament was working on was the creation of a Health and Welfare Policy Group that was addressing the issue of smoking, including that of shisha pipes, of young people. A campaign was also focusing on revamping the image of youth

provision to encourage uptake of such services. Members heard that there had been a recent question and answer session with councillors on crime in the borough.

The Chair thanked the Brent Youth Parliament representatives for the update and their hard work, which involved the Parliament's Executive meeting with Renata Chavda (Strategic Youth Engagement Officer, Children and Families) to discuss plans on a weekly basis.

My Place Project

In reply to a query from the Chair, Rick Boxer (Assistant Director – Achievement and Inclusion, Children and Families) advised that final approval from the Department for Education (DfE) was still awaited. The council had provided all the information required and was in frequent dialogue with DfE to progress the project.

Children in care council – Care in Action

The Chair emphasised the importance of the role councillors have as corporate parents and reminded Members that a training session for councillors was taking place with regard to this on 31 March. She also advised of the council's need to increase the number of foster parents and she asked that Children and Families be contacted if anyone knew of someone who may be interested in becoming a foster parent.

4. Education standards in Brent 2010

Faira Ellks (Head of School Improvement, Children and Families) introduced the report which set out the education standards achieved in Brent schools at each key stage for 2010. Faira Ellks then provided a brief summary of the results for the early years foundation stage and for each key stage. Members heard that the common trends included the relatively good performance from pupils of Asian/Indian and White British heritage and the underperformance of other groups such as those of Somali heritage, although there had been significant improvements in some areas.

Hilary Bell (School Improvement Services, Children and Families) then covered in some detail the information provided in the report with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EFYS) performance. Amongst the points highlighted included that despite the initiatives introduced, results had been disappointing and were below the national average. The key indicator used by national agencies, the percentage of children scoring 78 points plus across all areas of learning, including in personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and in communication, language, and literacy development (CLLD), had fallen by two points compared to 2009. Girl pupils had continued to outperform boys, with the gap widening by two points in 2010. The performance of Black Caribbean and White British children had improved by two and four points respectively, however the performance of Somali and White Other heritage pupils was particularly low by comparison. The gap between the highest and lowest performing pupils, the second key indicator, had fallen by four points but remained wider than the national gap.

Hilary Bell then explained that the reasons for the performance could be attributed to overly cautious judgements because of the robust systems for completion of the EYFS profile and the moderation of assessments, the strong focus on supporting children working within one to three points and the high mobility of EYFS staff meaning some staff were relatively inexperienced. To address this, the School Improvement Service has established a Quality Improvement Team to identify underachievement and to provide support and challenge according to need. The schools which have the lowest attaining 20% of children had been identified and measures were being taken to ensure the appropriate levels of support are in place. The lowest performing 20% of children in each locality were also analysed by ethnicity and gender in order to facilitate targeting of support. Other measures included increased focus on children attaining 4/5 points, the production of self-evaluation guidance from the Quality Improvement Team, an increase in the number of moderation meetings for practitioners and working with the National Strategies EFYS team to identify good practice and disseminate this more widely. Hilary Bell concluded by stating that there were strong reasons to believe that 2010 represented a blip in performance and standards would rise again in 2011.

Faira Ellks then drew Members' attention to performance at Key Stage 1. Overall, attainment at the Level 2+ key national benchmark remained below the national average at all levels and all subjects, with standards rising in reading and writing but falling in mathematics and science. A similar picture emerged for Level 2b, however for Level 3, although still below national averages, the gap had narrowed and standards had risen in all subjects. Girls performed better in all subjects at Level 2+ and 2b compared to boys, whilst boys performed better at mathematics in Level 3. Encouragingly, free school meal (FSM) pupils performed as well or better than FSM pupils nationally in all subjects and at all levels, whilst the gap for non free school meals pupils in Brent remained the same for reading and writing, decreased slightly for science but increased slightly in mathematics. Asian Indian and White British pupils continued to perform above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the performance of Black Caribbean pupils was below the national average for all pupils in the same subjects, the gap had reduced significantly in the last three years. Similarly, although the performance of Somali pupils remained significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, there had also been a narrowing of the gap. Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils had attained better than average results nationally for reading and writing and this upward trend had been evident in the last three years.

Turning to Key Stage 2, Faira Ellks advised that English and mathematics at Level 4+ and Level 5 were for the first time above the national average and standards had risen in both these subjects. Science at Key Stage 2 was assessed through teacher assessment only in 2010. However, performance had continued to decline and this followed the national trend which could be attributable to the Government focusing on English and mathematics. Although non-FSM pupils continued to perform better than FSM pupils, the gap had narrowed and FSM pupils performed better than FSM pupils nationally. Members noted that Asian Indian and White British pupils continued to be above Brent and national averages in English and mathematics, whilst for the first time the performance of Black Caribbean pupils was three points above the national average for all pupils in English and that of Asian Pakistani pupils one point above the national average of all pupils in English and mathematics combined. Somali pupil performance, although low by

comparison, had improved significantly for English and mathematics and the gap had narrowed considerably. The Key Stage 2 SEN/non-SEN gap was narrower than the national gap for 2008 and 2009, whilst the national 2010 figures were presently unavailable. The other key indicator, the percentage of pupils making at least two levels of progress in English and mathematics from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, was above the national average. Faira Ellks reported that there were no schools in Brent below the national floor target of 55% in 2010. However, she advised that the national floor target was to increase to 60% and at present eight Brent schools were below or fairly close to this score.

Fiona Deegan (Secondary Strategy Manager, Children and Families) presented the performance results for Key Stage 3. She began by advising that the national SATs tests are now non-statutory for secondary schools and so outcomes were based on teacher assessments. Members noted that comparisons with national data were complicated by the fact that schools used a variety of different strategies for measuring pupils' performance, as well as schools having a degree of flexibility in structuring the curriculum, so key stage assessments were not always based on pupils who had completed Year 9. In addition, one high performing school had problems with uploading data and their results were not included in the report. Performance at Level 5+ fell by one point in each of the subjects, with English and mathematics below the national averages. However at Level 6+ it had risen slightly in mathematics and science, whilst English and mathematics were in line with national averages at this level. The committee heard that this may be attributable to schools focusing on pupils who were at Level 5 and below. Fiona Deegan stated that the School Improvement Service continued to work closely with schools to ensure the accuracy of teacher assessment and the importance of good progress at Key Stage 3 in order to secure outcomes at Key Stage 4. Support was also being provided in science as a new GCSE specification was anticipated in 2011 and attention was focused on strengthening teaching and learning, particularly in lower performing schools.

At Key Stage 4, Fiona Deegan reported that pupils had surpassed the national average for achieving five good GCSE results and Brent was ranked 29th out of 150 local authorities on this measure, despite being near the bottom for levels of deprivation. No schools were below the floor target of 30% in 2010, with four schools that were below or in line with this target in 2009 all showing significant improvement in results. The floor target had since been raised to 35% and one school was currently performing just above this target. A key objective of the DfE is the level of progress of pupils between Key Stages 2 and 4 and in this respect progress had risen steadily over the last three years and remained well above national averages, with boys in particular improving more rapidly. Overall, the performance of SEN pupils was above the national average, and in some cases significantly so, and the gap in performance between SEN and non-SEN pupils was reducing. Members noted that the School Improvement Service was providing support and advice for schools in designing the curriculum for the English Baccalaureate to optimise pupil achievement in this qualification.

Fiona Deegan then summarised performance for Key Stage 5, where there had been a significant improvement in Level 3 results in 2010, with average point scores improving by the equivalent of one A-level grade, a higher rate of improvement than in London and nationally. Overall, the average point score was now above the London average and just one A-level grade below the national average. Similarly,

the average level three point score per entry had increased at a greater rate than in London and nationally and this was particularly encouraging as a greater proportion of pupils were starting at lower levels based on their GCSE results. Fiona Deegan advised that the A level value added performance had improved from good in 2009 to excellent in 2010 and Brent was within the top 25% of performers nationally, and for mathematics was proportionally amongst the highest in the UK.

During discussion, Ms J Cooper sought reasons as to some teachers not attending the EYFS profile training and what action was being taken to address this. With regard to possible overcautious assessments regarding EYFS performance, she commented that this was only one aspect of assessing a pupil's performance and so their progress should not be solely based on this assessment, especially as there were other activities a pupil may do that would reflect their ability at this age. Ms J Cooper also asked what groups were Afghani pupils classified under in the performance data. Mrs Hawra Imame sought a further explanation as to the inequalities in achievement between ethnic groups. Kishan Parshotam enquired why overall performance for Asian/Indian and Black pupils had fallen in 2010 compared to the improving trend from 2007-2009.

Councillor Harrison asked whether EYFS performance could partly be attributable to there being a greater proportion of temporary teaching staff compared to later years. Councillor Oladapo sought further reasons as to why some EYFS assessments may have been overly cautious.

The Chair queried why performance of FSM and SEN pupils was not included in the performance data for EYFS pupils and the reasons why the National Strategies EFYS team would cease activity this week. In noting that EYFS performance was below the national average overall, the Chair asked what measures were taken to try and improve underachieving pupils. With regard to Key Stage 1, information was requested with regard to statemented and SEN pupils and whether the 'five outcomes' measure was still applicable. In acknowledging that no schools were below the floor target at Key Stage 2, the Chair enquired whether there were schools under special measures for any of the school years. The Chair commented on the encouraging progress by some pupils who had risen from below the national average at EYFS level to above it at Key Stages 1 and 2. In respect of Key Stage 3, the Chair enquired whether the removal of national SATS test as statutory for secondary schools may have a negative impact.

Councillor Arnold (Lead Member for Children and Families) was invited to comment. Councillor Arnold welcomed the detailed analysis in the report providing useful information and commented on the encouraging performance overall of pupils in the older years. She stated that early years' performance was more likely to be hindered by health and socio-economic factors, whilst the expansion of nursery places to two year-old pupils would raise capacity issues. Councillor Arnold felt that the modular approach to teaching was an advantage and enquired whether the changes in national SATs status would affect this method and what were the schools' reaction to this. She also asked why science subjects were popular A level choices with students.

In reply to the issues raised, Hilary Bell advised that the teachers who had not undertaken EYFS profiling training had been recorded and the School Improvement Service would be visiting schools to make suitable arrangements to ensure these

teachers were given the time to attend training. The committee heard that most EYFS teachers were on permanent contracts. However, there was a significant number who came from Australia or New Zealand who may not remain at a school for long as they pursued travel plans which may partly explain why some may not have undertaken EYFS Profile training. With regard to overly cautious EYFS assessments, Members noted that teachers had robustly implemented the EYFS profile and moderation of assessment and in some cases this may have meant some pupils were marked more harshly than would otherwise be the case. In addition, the assessments were complicated to undertake and quite subjective in nature. Hilary Bell advised that FSM and SEN factors were not quite as significant at EYFS level and a breakdown of performance for pupils under these categories had therefore not been included. She explained that a not insignificant proportion of pupils underachieving at EYFS subsequently made up ground at the intervening years and the initial underachievement this may be partly due to some not benefitting from any pre-schooling or needing emotional and social support. Some pupils may be well below national standards at Reception class levels, but it was a measure of their progress that they were able to reach or surpass the national average in subsequent years.

Hilary Bell explained that overall achievement had dropped amongst children of all ethnic backgrounds, including the relatively low achievement levels of Somalian pupils. The School Improvement Service was undertaking an analysis of reasons for inequalities in achievements amongst different ethnic groups and putting in appropriate support measures and providing support to practitioners. A wide range of reasons could be attributed to inequalities in achievement, for example Somalian pupils may have only recently arrived in the country with limited experience of speaking English and with no pre-schooling. CILT, the National Centre for Languages, was also addressing this issue through a project designed to boost literacy standards in schools through a variety of methods including use of ICT.

Faira Ellks commented that the 'five outcomes' measure was no longer appearing in documentation. It was confirmed that Lyon Park Junior and Kilburn Park primary schools were subject to special measures to improve performance.

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director – Achievement and Inclusion) advised that the Government's SEN Green Paper was proposing to continue with the current system with some possible minor changes until 2014, where upon the Education, Health and Care Plan would come into effect. There were no details as yet as to how the plan would impact upon SEN arrangements and various models would be considered.

In respect of Key Stage 3, Fiona Deegan commented that the removal of SATs was not necessarily a negative development as there had always been a level of dispute in respect of performance recorded. The greater flexibility afforded to teachers in respect of assessment was also a benefit in comparison with the more detailed criteria previously. Schools could still continue to use SATs if they so wished and it could still be a useful tool, particularly in respect of maths. The review of the National Curriculum would include a review of the GCSE structure and the Government's preference was for a linear exam structure. Consultation on this would continue until 14 April and the School Improvement Service had submitted a response and was encouraging Brent schools to do likewise. Fiona Deegan also advised that science 'A' levels were popular in Brent as they were highly valued by

students and parents and their vocational nature was also seen as a positive aspect.

In respect of ethnicity, Fiona Deegan advised that Afghan pupils were likely to be classified under Asian Other, however classification was determined by the pupils themselves. She indicated that she would be happy to provide any further information on a particular ethnic group.

The Chair thanked the School Improvement Service for the presentation and welcomed the good progress that had been made. She suggested that a press release highlighting this would be beneficial and Councillor Arnold added that this would be used to as part of the campaign to raise the profile of Brent schools.

5. Update on implementing the new policy for allocation of early years full time places

Sue Gates (Head of Integrated and Extended Services) introduced the report and explained that the council only received funding for part time early years places for up to 15 hours through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Historically, the council had always provided full time early years places with the additional £2 million required taken from the overall DSG which meant less funding to distribute to schools through the schools funding formula. As a result of budgetary pressures, the Executive had made a decision to implement a new policy for the allocation of early years full time places based on need. The new policy would only offer full time places based on need and economic disadvantage rather than a 'first come' basis. However, as the admissions process for implementation would have needed to commence in September 2010, prior to the completion of a parental or provider assessment and consultation, implementation of the new policy was now to be undertaken in September 2012 following a decision by the Executive in October 2010 to extend the implementation period. Sue Gates drew Members' attention to the rising number of three and four year olds in Brent and the numbers occupying part and full time places. A significant proportion of children were not obtaining places, including vulnerable children and the hard to reach. Pressure on places was likely to increase as the Government wished to expand places to all disadvantaged two year olds in 2013 and a large number of two year olds in Brent would fit this criteria. Members noted that consideration may need to be given to offering only free places on a part time basis after September 2015.

During discussion, Councillor Harrison sought further information as to how additional early years places could be provided to match increasing demand. The Chair asked what further steps were being considered and when would consultation with parents take place. She also asked when the outcome of the council's recent bid for an additional 100 funded places for 2011/12 was due.

In reply, Sue Gates advised that additional places would be provided through the PVI sector and nursery centres, however the challenge of providing places could not be underestimated in the present circumstances, although there would be enough places for at least the most vulnerable children. The next steps involved gathering evidence to be presented to the Executive and the Schools Forum. In respect of full time places, continuing to provide these in the longer term would be especially challenging and once more information had been collected and a clearer picture had emerged, parents would be consulted. Members noted that the

application for funding of 100 additional places would be determined in approximately four weeks.

6. Restructuring of Children's Centre buildings and provision in Brent

Sue Gates introduced this item, stating that in January the Executive had considered how provision of children's centres would continue in the future in light of the financial pressures and as a result three proposed new children's centres would not be built. However, the remaining 17 children's centres would continue to operate, with two in temporary buildings until May. Although staffing was to be reduced, two teams would serve across the locality and continue to offer a universal service and every family with a child under five years old were entitled to the service. Support would also be received from mid wives, there would be more shared information and support across service areas and a more targeted intervention approach taken with regard to vulnerable children.

During discussion, it was commented that less staff would impact upon service and that the voluntary sector should play a role in working with children's centres. The Chair sought clarification with regard to any financial claw back from the Government.

In reply, Sue Gates advised that it was intended that voluntary sector organisations work with children's centres and it was important that the centres were fully utilised. Governance issues were being considered and advisory boards would have voluntary sector representatives by the second stage of the restructuring once the initial changes had been embedded from the first stage. The committee heard that the council would need to return the funds to the Government that were to be used to help build the new children's centres.

The Chair stated that anyone interest in joining the children's centres advisory boards should contact Children and Families.

7. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Andrew Davies (Policy Officer, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) drew Members' attention to the work programme and confirmed that the Youth Offending task group would be submitting a final report to the committee for approval. He advised that the Welsh Harp Education Centre was to remain open and that an update on this could be provided should Members wished. He welcomed any suggestions for other items to be added to the work programme.

The Chair added that the Youth Offending task group had involved a considerable piece of work aimed at prevention of youth offending.

8. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to be determined at the Annual Council meeting on 11 May 2011.

9. **Any other urgent business**

School places

Rik Boxer advised that there was an acute lack of places for Reception, Year One and Year Two, although some additional school places had been provided by the Ashleigh Gardens Early Learning Centre. The problem was compounded by a greater number of new children arriving in Brent than expected and at present there were 270 children without places, with only 52 places available for these school years. The Executive had agreed places for three additional classrooms at Brentfield, Newfield and Preston Manor primary schools and these would be in place in time for the new school year in September 2011. Temporary expansions equating to six forms of entry at various sites had also been agreed. Overall, school places continued to be at a premium at most schools.

Rik Boxer explained that there were presently 154 more applications for primary school places than there was at the same stage last year, above the Greater London Authority projection and as a result there was likely to be a shortfall of places. Pressure on secondary school places was not so acute, however the rising number of primary school pupils would filter through to demand on secondary school places in subsequent years. Members noted that just under 80% of parents had had their children placed in their first or second preference schools at secondary school level. Rik Boxer concluded that the issue of school places would continue to be a main priority.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

H. GLADBAUM
Chair