



MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 18 March 2019 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Afzal, Hector, Knight and Thakkar

Also Present: Councillors Agha, Farah, Hylton and Miller

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies were received from Councillors Shahzad and Conneely and from appointed observer, Mrs Jean Roberts, who was represented at the meeting by Mr John Roche.

2. Declarations of interests

The following personal interests were declared with respect to the three substantive items of business to be discussed at the meeting:

- i) Councillor Ketan Sheth as a governor of the federation of St Joseph's Infant School and St Joseph's Junior School and as a member of the Board of Harrow College.
- ii) Councillor Knight as a governor of Wykeham Primary
- iii) Councillor Colwill as a governor of St Gregory's Catholic Science College.
- iv) Mr Frederick as Chair of the All Saints Trust of St Mary's, Chair of Governors at St Gregory's Catholic Science College and as a member of the Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board (SSEPB).

3. Deputations (if any)

There were no deputations received.

4. Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2019 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

6. **School Standards and Achievement Report 2017-18**

Councillor Agha (Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills) introduced the School Standards and Achievement Report 2017-18, advising that there had been improving performance across the different educational phases. Highlighting the importance of the strong partnership work between the council and Brent's schools, Councillor Agha expressed his gratitude for the attendance at the meeting of Martine Clark (Executive Headteacher, Byron Court Primary School and Brent Teaching School Alliance), Georgina Nutton (Headteacher, Preston Park Primary School) and Rose Ashton (Headteacher, Chalkhill Primary School and Interim Executive Headteacher, Leopold Primary School). Also in attendance to address members' queries were Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People), Brian Grady (Operational Director, Safeguarding Performance and Strategy) and John Galligan (Head of Setting and School Effectiveness).

Outlining the headlines of the report, John Galligan explained that the quality of education provision had continued to improve, with progress rates rising again for the 2017-18 year. For Key Stage 2 (KS2) Brent was above the national averages for the progress measure for reading, writing and mathematics. However, whilst attainment had risen at Key Stage 2, it had not increased as fast as the national and London averages and as a consequence was below both the averages for reading and writing. Brent performed very well against the national and London averages for all of the secondary headline attainment and progress measures. For the headline Progress 8 measure, Brent was the second highest out of 151 local authorities in England for the second year running.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and officers for the report and extended particular welcome to the school partnership colleagues, inviting them to briefly outline their roles. Martine Clark advised that in September 2018 she had taken on the role of Sub-Regional Lead for North West London. This was one of five Sub-Regional leads responsible for the Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) in West London. A key element of this role was promoting partnership and collaboration between the teaching schools, which was essential to achieving improvement. Georgina Nutton advised that in addition to her role as Headteacher of Preston Park Primary School, she was an Associate Member of the Brent Teaching Schools Alliance and had worked closely with the council's School Effectiveness Team. Rose Ashton advised that in addition to her role at Chalkhill she had taken on the role of Interim Headteacher at Leopold Primary School and had received support from the School Effectiveness Team and the Brent Teaching School Alliance.

The Chair invited questions from the committee. Members subsequently questioned why some Brent schools were underperforming, what factors contributed to underperformance, and what the role of the local authority was in addressing these. The committee sought details of the particular challenges experienced by primary schools in Brent, the actions put in place to address these and how progress against these were measured. Specific comment was sought on what was being done to support improvement in attainment for reading and writing at primary schools and it was queried whether issues with underperformance tended to be experienced by the same schools' year after year.

Members further questioned how good practice was shared with colleagues across the borough's schools and whether the creation of additional layers of management in schools detracted funding from pupils. It was queried what measures were in place to attract the best Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT). The committee questioned what support was put in place to support and engage families with English as a Second Language (ESL) and more broadly, sought further details of parental engagement by Brent's schools. The committee acknowledged the excellent quality of partnership working with the primary sector and invited comment on the partnership working with the secondary sector. In concluding their questioning, the committee asked for an overview of the number of vacancies in governing bodies in Brent's schools.

In response to the queries raised John Galligan, emphasised that the attainment and progress results should be considered alongside each other. As previously stated, Brent had performed well in terms of progress measures. Many Brent schools had pupils starting at a lower attainment level for a variety of reasons including, ESL and pupil mobility/turnover. There were also a number of school specific factors that needed to be considered including turbulence in leadership/ leadership transitions and recruitment of teachers. Gail Tolley highlighted the importance of the role of governing boards of schools and therefore, the significance of recruiting effective and strong governors, noting the very successful campaign currently underway to recruit governors with strong skills-sets. Commenting on the role of the Local Authority, Gail Tolley advised that the council had a powerful influencing role but cautioned that the School Effectiveness Team was small.

Rose Ashton spoke on the importance of leadership in a school, advising that this affected every aspect of a school, from the building maintenance and kitchen standards to teaching staff and what happened in the classrooms. Often, it was not until a Headteacher left a school that this became quite so apparent and therefore, succession planning was very important to the stability of a school. Martine Clark explained that the constantly changing objectives and targets from the Department for Education (DfE) also contributed to the turbulence that could be experienced by schools. It was noted for instance that changes to requirements around NQTs had an impact on teacher quality and the level of support required by NQTs in schools.

Gail Tolley advised that school improvement plans were the responsibility of the governing boards of schools and the effectiveness of governing bodards varied. Where the Local Authority had concerns, a Rapid Improvement Group (RIG) would be instigated, whereby the council would work collaboratively with often a reconstituted governing board to raise standards in the school. This was a very effective measure. Georgina Nutton discussed her experience of working with a RIG, advising that it had been both rigorously challenging and very supportive, and had resulted in a more effective, efficient and upskilled governing body. The committee further heard that best practice was shared via partnership networks including the Brent Schools Partnership and the Brent Teaching School Alliance. Martine Clark emphasised that in 2011, 74 per cent of Brent's schools had an Ofsted rating of good or outstanding, that figure now sat at 96 per cent. This success resulted from changes implemented by Gail Tolley and on the creation of the Brent Schools Partnership. It was not possible to achieve sustained change in isolation and the partnership working with and between schools was the key to the continued improvement of Brent's schools. Gail Tolley emphasised that the largest

number of school improvement specialists were in schools and the role of school to school support was essential. Members further heard that the Regional Schools Commissioner had recommended Brent as an example of good partnership working to improve school standards. It was confirmed that where the outcomes for children were not as strong as they should be, actions were taken to support improvement in that school and therefore, there were no schools that would consistently year after year record poor outcomes.

Addressing Members' queries regarding supporting improvement in reading and writing in primary schools, Martine Clark advised that the DfE had appointed five Specialist Centres of Education for literacy to support teachers to change the way in which literacy was taught. The Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board (SSEPB), which provided strategic oversight of education provision in Brent and included representatives of all school effectiveness partners, had also agreed to create a local hub for literacy to ensure schools had access to a model for excellence in the teaching of literacy.

Martine Clark explained that there were different forms of financial support for school improvement, but noted the importance of charging for specialist input as this allowed schools to release staff to assist other schools without detriment to the school from which the resource was drawn. This was a cost effective model which enabled schools to receive bespoke input.

Rose Ashton advised that she encouraged a whole family approach in her schools, and parent engagement was key. Audits were conducted with parents to garner views on the support and activities they would like. There were many opportunities to engage parents, including encouraging parents to volunteer at the school. Family learning was an important focus and schools therefore needed to have a creative and connective curriculum to maximise such opportunities. Many schools had Parent Support Advisors, who ensured that the right support was in place, such as translators, to engage with parents.

Gail Tolley confirmed that partnership working with secondary schools in Brent was good, irrespective of the type of school and added that there was a Secondary Headteacher representative on the SSEPB. Furthermore, as the Strategic Director of Children and Young People, she had access to and visited all of the secondary schools. John Galligan advised that there had been an improvement in the number of governor vacancies listed in the report.

During the discussion, the committee requested the following information, not available at the meeting: details of the budgets set aside for supporting parental engagement to be provided to the committee with respect to Chalkhill Primary School and Leopold Primary School, if made available by the schools.

RESOLVED: that the School Standards and Achievement Report 2017-18 be noted.

7. Improving educational achievement of Black Caribbean boys

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Agha (Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills) introduced the report on improving educational achievement of Black Caribbean Boys, noting that there was a commitment to raise

the attainment of particular groups among Brent's pupils, including that of boys of Black Caribbean heritage, to narrow the gap with their peers. The committee was advised that school partnership colleagues Martine Clark (Executive Headteacher, Byron Court Primary School and Brent Teaching School Alliance), Georgina Nutton (Headteacher, Preston Park Primary School) and Rose Ashton (Headteacher, Chalkhill Primary School and Interim Executive Headteacher, Leopold Primary School) were in attendance to discuss the report, alongside officers Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People), Brian Grady (Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy) and John Galligan (Head of Setting and School Effectiveness).

Setting out the key highlights of the report, John Galligan informed the committee a Schools Project Raising the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys Strategic Group had been established by the Brent Schools Partnership (BSP), chaired by Rose Ashton as the Headteacher for the BSP Specialist Centre for Black Caribbean Achievement (Chalkhill Primary School). The strategy group had developed a strategic framework setting out actions to be taken by a range of stakeholders to strengthen capacity and expertise in schools and to support parents to contribute to their children's learning and personal, social and emotional development. To deliver this, in March 2018, the Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board (SSEPB) agreed to develop a proposal from the Director of Children's Services to Schools Forum. The proposal was agreed by the SSEPB in May 2018 and presented to Schools Forum in June, at which time the initiative was approved and funding of £561,750 over two years agreed. The initiative included the following strands: a supported rigorous and robust analysis of the performance of pupils of Black Caribbean heritage and the effectiveness of key aspects of schools' practice; the designation of a Black Caribbean Achievement Champion in every school in Brent for a period of two years, with a programme of half termly training; the development of online resources for parents on strengthening their role and contribution to improving their children's learning and progress, and reducing the likelihood of their children being excluded from schools; and, leadership and management of the overall schools based Black Caribbean Strategy. In concluding the overview of the report, John Galligan emphasised that approximately 40 per cent of boys of Black Caribbean heritage in Brent were achieving in line with national averages.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and Officer for the introduction to the report.

The committee subsequently questioned whether attainment for this group had improved over the past year and how current figures compared with other London boroughs. Members questioned the value of exclusions, highlighting the risk of further alienating pupils and their families and sought clarity on the numbers of exclusions for boys of Black Caribbean heritage. Further queries were raised regarding the support put in place for excluded children. Members then questioned the efforts made to demystify the schools' system for parents in the borough, noting the importance of the parental engagement. Members sought details of how parents were informed of the academic expectations for their children and what was done to gather parents' perceptions of the issue of attainment for this group. Queries were raised regarding the recruitment and retention of BAME staff in schools. It was noted that the council had received a Caribbean delegation in past years which had been keen to address issues of education and it was queried what had resulted from these discussions. In concluding their questioning, the committee

asked whether similar action would be taken to address the underperformance in attainment of other groups.

In response to the queries raised, John Galligan advised that the most recent data evidenced that attainment of this group had increased; however, it had also increased across London and therefore the attainment gap remained the same. It was not possible to undertake direct comparisons with other boroughs as attainment figures were not reported in this way.

Rose Ashton spoke on the role of exclusions in schools, emphasising that permanent exclusions were always a last resort and should come only when a school had exhausted every other response. Fixed term exclusions were more common and were a short episode of exclusion during which time additional support should be put in place to help resolve the issues at hand. John Galligan advised that the numbers of permanent exclusions were low compared to fixed term exclusions and had reduced between 2017 and 2018. Fixed term exclusions overall had slightly increased but for boys of Black Caribbean heritage had decreased slightly, though they remained overrepresented in these figures. Gail Tolley advised that there had been 47 permanent exclusions across Brent for this period. It was emphasised that each year group had approximately 4,000 pupils and therefore, as a proportion of the overall school population, 47 exclusions was a very small number. Nonetheless, this figure represented a very difficult outcome for those children. Children of primary school age who were permanently excluded were likely to be placed at another primary school for a fresh start. At secondary school, it was more likely that a child would go to Brent River College, or another alternative provision.

Rose Ashton advised that higher numbers of Black Caribbean pupils accessed further education at an older age and noted that whilst the role of parents was significant, it was also necessary to consider the breadth and inclusivity of the curriculum at school. With regard to engaging parents, it was important to recognise that aspirations may need to be encouraged and children exposed to opportunities they may not otherwise have, for example music lessons. Another facet of the work being undertaken via the Brent Schools Partnership was audits of schools. The audits involved questioning staff and were designed in such a way to explore perceptions and identify fixed mind-sets. The audits also involved conversations with parents and provided all with an opportunity to share their views on the matter. Martine Clark advised that the Black Caribbean Achievement Champions were a key link to the schools' governing boards and the community. Part of this role was to speak with and engage parents around this issue. The planned website resource would also help to guide families through the complexities of the education system and provide connections between families. This resource was currently in the development stage and represented a large piece of work but was due to be delivered in line with the project plan. Gail Tolley added that the council's plans to establish Family Hubs would also contribute to this agenda, as unlike children's centres, Family Hubs would provide support to the whole family irrespective of the age of the children.

Commenting on the recruitment of BAME staff, Martine Clark, advised that the Brent Teaching School Alliance had successfully applied to deliver both the National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for Middle Leadership and the NPQ for Senior Leadership and were required to monitor the numbers of BAME staff

recruited to the programmes. Brent was also part of the Mayor of London's 'Getting Ahead London' scheme which supported the progression of senior leaders to future Headteachers and had a target for BAME applicants. Gail Tolley advised that whilst role models were important, the overall quality of leadership and teaching in a schools had a significant impact on performance.

Brian Grady confirmed that the Caribbean Qualifications Authority had previously visited to discuss the introduction of a Kitemark qualification. An update on the outcome of these discussions with Brent's schools could be obtained for the committee.

John Galligan advised that there were gaps in attainment for other groups and each school was responsible for addressing these, with appropriate challenge provided by the School Effectiveness Team. At the Annual Governors Conference, the attainment of Brent's pupils was explored and the role of governors in analysing and challenging leaders on this matter was emphasised. Gail Tolley identified that the gap between the achievement of Somali Boys and Girls for instance, narrowed as they progressed through the school system and noted that there was significantly greater uptake of Early Years provision for Somali children compared to Black Caribbean children, particularly boys. It was emphasised that 94 per cent of Early Years provision in Brent was rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted and that uptake of these early years' opportunities could be an important factor in supporting progress for children in the latter stages of their education.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, note and present the following recommendations of the committee to the Setting and School Effectiveness Board and the Brent Schools Partnership.
 - a) Robust parental engagement should be undertaken by schools to enable parents to navigate and participate in the school system, allowing them to better support their children to succeed.
 - b) Consideration be given to bringing together parents of Asian students, a group which achieved well academically both locally and nationally, with parents of Black Caribbean students to share and discuss approaches to educational support and other related matters.
- ii) That the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, seek confirmation from the Brent Schools Partnership of the timeline for delivering the online resource for parents, and communicate the view of the committee that this would be a valuable resource and should be delivered at the earliest opportunity.

8. Contextual Safeguarding Overview Task Group Report

The Chair invited Councillor Hylton (Chair of the Contextual Safeguarding Overview Task Group) to introduce the task group report.

Councillor Hylton advised that the task group had been appointed to review the development of a contextual safeguarding approach in Brent. It was explained that the focus of children's safeguarding had traditionally been on risks to children which existed within a family; however, it was increasingly recognised by safeguarding practitioners that risks to an adolescent child could emerge outside their family homes. In recent years, this awareness had crystallised into a new approach called contextual safeguarding, which asked practitioners to address the risks present in 'contexts' outside the home such as peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods in which an adolescent child lives. It was emphasised that whilst this was a new approach for Brent, many of the principles of contextual safeguarding were already embedded in practice. In concluding her introduction, Councillor Hylton drew the committee's attention to the five recommendations set out in the report of the task group and invited the committee to endorse the recommendations to Cabinet.

Members raised a number of questions in the subsequent discussion of the report. It was noted that the success of a number of recommendations relied upon good engagement with stakeholders and Brent's communities, and the committee queried how this would be achieved without additional funding. It was further queried whether opportunities for partnership working and community engagement could be accessed via Brent's status as Borough of Culture. Members then questioned what work was being done around supporting the period immediately after school where there was a greater safeguarding risk for children.

In response, Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) confirmed that existing resources would be used to take forward this agenda, noting by way of example that the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board would use resources allocated to the Board to lead on the first recommendation regarding transport. Further examples of utilising existing resources included using the Time to Talk events run by the Strategy and Partnerships Team to promote Contextual Safeguarding and more generally, asking all council colleagues to look at the work of the council through the lens of Contextual Safeguarding. Contextual Safeguarding had recently been the focus of a Senior Management Group meeting and the response to this had been really positive.

Brian Grady (Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy) confirmed that the London Borough of Culture fed into the task group and one of the key aspects of work that was being considered out of this was supporting young people to feel safe in public spaces. Pascoe Sawyers (Head of Strategy and Partnerships) advised that following the Outcome Based Review on gangs, it had been decided to establish a youth fund, which was shortly due to be launched, to provide resources for local communities to run activities highlighting the issues at hand and celebrating the successes of young people.

Addressing the committee's comments regarding the risk for children and young people in the period following the end of the school day, Gail Tolley advised that the council was developing a stronger partnership with the Young Brent Foundation which was proposing to provide youth provision in the evenings at Roundwood Youth Centre. It was noted that unfortunately, the reduced availability of youth provision was a clear outcome of the government's policy of austerity.

During the discussion, a member expressed concern that community centres in Brent, once leased to an organisation, were no longer generally accessible for the

communities and that there should be an emphasis on accommodating youth provision in those buildings. It was agreed that this concern be communicated to colleagues in the council's property teams.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hylton and the officers for their contribution to the discussion.

RESOLVED:

- i) that Cabinet note the committee's endorsement of the five recommendations of the Contextual Safeguarding Overview Task Group as detailed in the Task Group Report and set out below:
 - Recommendation 1: To support bringing together representatives from Transport for London, bus companies, and employee representatives with schools, further education colleges, the council, and statutory Boards to address concerns about adolescents on the transportation and bus network.
 - Recommendation 2: To further support organisations working with young people to promote and develop extra-school activities, particularly in the summer months, for Brent's adolescent children.
 - Recommendation 3: Brent's approach to contextual safeguarding should specifically develop its work with further education colleges to help address the risks faced by adolescent children in this context.
 - Recommendation 4: A future Social Media Strategy should include how the local authority can work in partnership with external organisations or companies to address areas of concern in adolescents using social media and being online which are identified by Brent Council's approach to contextual safeguarding.
 - Recommendation 5: To develop a one-off public information campaign working with partner organisations and the community to support the development of contextual safeguarding in Brent
- ii) that the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, report the following suggestions made by the committee to senior colleagues within the council and provide feedback to the committee as appropriate:
 - a) Consideration be given to including a standard paragraph heading in the corporate report template titled 'Contextual Safeguarding' to highlight the council's commitment to the approach;
 - b) Consideration be given to promoting a simple Contextual Safeguarding message to children at school, which in turn would help to engage parents.

9. **Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19 Update**

RESOLVED: that the contents of the Update on the Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 report, be noted.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.33pm

CLLR KETAN SHETH
Chair