



MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 13 June 2012 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Cheese (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Aden, Al-Ebadi, Pavey, Mr A Frederick, Ms E Points, Dr Levison, Ms J Cooper, Mrs L Gouldbourne, S Choudhary and Ogunro

Also present: Councillor Arnold

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Mashari, Matthews and Mrs H Imame

1. Declaration of personal and prejudicial interests

Councillor Cheese declared that he was a member of the Advisory Board for the Kilburn Locality.

Councillor Pavey advised that he was a governor at Wembley Park Primary School and was Chair of the Advisory Board for the Wembley Locality.

2. Deputations (if any)

There were no deputations.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on Thursday 29 March 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 March 2012 were approved as a correct record.

4. Brent Youth Parliament update

In the absence of the Brent Youth Parliament representatives, the committee did not consider this item.

5. Key Stage 5 Attainment and Key Stage 5 Destinations

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director, Achievement and Inclusion) advised that the several reports regarding education attainment submitted to recent meetings of the committee and the current meeting provided a comprehensive and detailed overview of this subject. Further information on London and national averages for education attainment, as had been requested previously by the committee, was tabled for members' information.

John Galligan (Strategic Lead for 14 – 19 Education and Training) presented the report on the education standards achieved in Brent at Key Stage 5 (KS5) for the academic year 2010/11. There were five key indicators used to measure education

attainment at KS5. These included attainment at Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19 and A Level point score per pupil and per entry. There had been sustained improvement in the overall attainment of Brent young people at KS5 over the past five years and Brent had remained above the London and national averages for all key indicators. Furthermore, the attainment gap between those in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and other Brent pupils had continued to narrow.

With regard to the destinations of pupils at the end of KS4, John Galligan highlighted that in 2011, only 1% of Brent pupils in 2011 had left education to start training programmes and enter employment. The National Apprenticeship Service had run several initiatives to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities available to young people and it was anticipated that this might increase the number of students choosing this option in the future. In contrast, 94% of Brent pupils had continued in education at KS5; this compared to a London average of 92% and a national average of 88%. Members' attention was drawn to the table provided at paragraph 3.7 of the report which set out the types of courses started by pupils at the end of KS4. Whilst there had been a decline in the proportion of pupils starting Level 3 courses at the age of 16 between 2008 and 2011, there had been a rise in the proportion starting Level 1 and Level 2 courses. John Galligan advised that this reflected the provision of better advice and guidance to Brent pupils. In particular, pupils who needed to address skills gaps prior to engaging in a Level 3 course were choosing to do so via Level 1 and Level 2 courses. As a consequence, those engaging in Level 3 courses were better prepared and the proportion of students successfully completing these courses had increased.

John Galligan explained that the provision of advice and guidance formed one of the key priorities of the 14-19 partnership, along with success rates at Year 12 and retention into Year 13. A further priority of the Partnership was to narrow the gap between the Brent average and the FSM cohort and pupils of Black Caribbean, Somali or White British ethnicity. With reference to the White British ethnic group, John Galligan explained that a higher proportion of young people from this ethnic background were becoming unemployed at age 16 and were over-represented in the group of those not in education, employment or training (NEET). Analysis of destinations for these groups demonstrated that the proportion of Black Caribbean and white British groups continuing in education was lower than the Brent average. In support of these priorities, data analysis sessions were being offered to schools to identify areas for improvement. These analyses sought to explore how representative the sixth form cohort was of a whole school community and to identify performance by ethnicity, gender, prior attainment and whether a child was in receipt of FSM.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee raised several queries. With reference to paragraph 3.7 of the report, Councillor Pavey sought further details regarding the 'other courses' category included in the table detailing the type of courses started at age 16 by Brent pupils. Councillor Pavey further queried how many of those starting courses from this category went on to take A Levels. Councillor Choudhary queried how the data was gathered with respect to the FSM cohort and those categorised as New Arrivals. With reference to the target to engage all young people in education or employment with training by the age of 17 by September 2013, Councillor Choudhary sought further details of how this would be achieved. Similarly, Ms Elsie Points queried why there was a low take up of Apprenticeship programmes.

In response to the committee's queries, John Galligan advised that the other courses category mainly included vocational courses which lead to Level 2 or low Level 3 qualifications. A full breakdown of these courses would be provided to the committee. Details of the numbers of those progressing to A Level courses could not be provided yet as the academic year was not yet complete. With regard to the FSM cohort and New Arrivals, this data was gathered via the schools and college census, which required schools and colleges to return data on each pupil. Pupils were considered to be New Arrivals if they had come to Brent from any other country outside of the UK. Turning to the query regarding the NEETS target, John Galligan advised that at present 2.2% of young people in Brent were not engaged in education or employment with training. Targeted and intensive support would be provided to specific young people to ensure that the opportunities that did exist were taken up. Councillor Arnold advised that the council was also working with local employers to encourage the development of more apprenticeship opportunities within the area and noted that the council offered some apprenticeship positions which were reserved for Looked After Children. John Galligan added that all London local authorities had pledged to include within their procurement processes the expectation that a business provide apprenticeship positions.

Councillor Arnold sought clarification as to whether Academies formed part of the 14 – 19 Partnership and was advised that they were. John Galligan explained that the local authority had a statutory responsibility to engage all young people in education or employment with training and therefore worked with all providers to meet this.

RESOLVED

- i. That the continuing improvements in education standards at Key Stage 5 be noted
- ii. That the contribution made by Brent providers, Brent 14-19 Partnership, Services to Schools and Brent Connexions be noted.

6. **Education achievement in Brent 2011: Analysis by ethnicity**

Naureen Kauser (Strategic Lead for Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement) presented a report to the committee detailing education achievement in Brent in 2011 by ethnicity. 92 % of pupils in Brent were from minority ethnic groups and improving the outcomes of underachieving groups of pupils was a high priority for Services to Schools. The report focussed on five main ethnic groups; Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean and White Other. The Black African group had been further unpicked to focus on Somali pupils who formed the majority of this group in Brent schools; however, it was noted that there was no national data available for the attainment of Somali pupils prior to Key Stage 4 (KS4).

Naureen Kauser drew members' attention to the tables provided for each educational stage. For the Early Years Foundation stage, there had been significant improvement in education attainment for Somali pupils and a steady upward trend for Black Caribbean children, although for 2011 it remained below the Brent and National averages. At Key Stage 1 (KS1), Asian Indian pupils performed above Brent averages and above or in-line with national averages in reading, writing and

mathematics. There had been significant improvement in Somali pupils attainment across these subjects. For Black Caribbean pupils however, attainment had been fairly static for the previous five years. Asian Indian pupils similarly outperformed Key Stage 2 (KS2) attainment for the group nationally in 2010 and 2011. Attainment of Black Caribbean pupils declined in 2011, although remained in line with that for all Brent pupils. Achievement of Somali pupils at this stage had declined significantly for 2011. The key measure for Key Stage 4 (KS4) was the attainment of five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and Mathematics. Against this measure, the low performance of Black Caribbean pupils continued to be a concern. Somali pupils' attainment however, had improved the most comparatively. The performance of Asian Indian pupils again was significantly above the national average for all students. The attainment for White Other pupils and Asian Pakistani pupils was well below national averages.

Naureen Kauser explained that Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement (EMTA) Team carried out a range of activities to support schools in raising achievement of underperforming groups. The EMTA team analysed data at both Local Authority and individual school level. This information was disseminated widely to schools and officers to enable appropriate challenge and support of schools through the school Link advisers. Via investigative action research projects, the EMTA team also aimed to identify and disseminate good practice to schools in relation to the strategies employed to tackle underperformance. These action research projects have proved very successful. A new audit process has also been established to help schools identify their strengths and areas for development with regard to ethnic minority achievement. The EMTA team has a Refugee Education officer who supported schools in raising attainment of Somali pupils via methods including in-class targeted support, language development, creation of effective induction programmes, and promoting positive home-school links.

Naureen Kauser advised that the EMTA team also worked with a range of other partners. The team supported supplementary schools to help them achieve the Quality Framework Award. This Award provided Supplementary Schools with a self-assessment tool to evidence their commitment to quality assurance and safeguarding and could assist them in improving the services they provide. An Improving Outcomes task group also worked closely with community groups to explore ways of reducing the disproportionate numbers of exclusions of pupils of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage.

In concluding, Naureen Kauser noted that priorities for the coming year continued to focus on raising the attainment of Somali pupils and improving outcomes for Black Caribbean pupils, particularly at KS2 and KS4. A further focus would be placed on providing schools with specific support to improve the quality of teaching and learning for ethnic minority pupils.

The committee raised several issues in the subsequent discussion. Mrs Gouldbourne queried whether the Improving Outcomes task group worked with schools as well as community groups. Mr Frederick queried whether this task group worked with all schools. Councillor Choudhary queried why Brent had performed below the national average at KS2. Councillor Pavey sought further details regarding efforts to encourage parental and family involvement, particularly with Black Caribbean families. Mr Frederick queried how best practice identified in better performing schools was disseminated to other schools. Ms Cooper queried

whether any relationship had been identified between the better performing schools and the concentration of ethnic or FSM groups. Councillor Choudhary further queried whether there were career officers in each school.

Responding to the committee's questions, Naureen Kauser advised that the Improving Outcomes task group included a secondary Head Teacher from the NW10 locality and did work with schools in this locality directly. Children from this area were more likely to be excluded from school and the task group aimed to provide additional support to try to reduce this likelihood. At present, the task group was attempting to identify whether there were some supplementary schools through which additional support could be provided to pupils at risk of exclusion. A further report on this task group could be provided at a future meeting of the committee. Mr Frederick requested a copy of the programme.

With regard to education achievement at KS2, Naureen Kauser advised that the achievement for 2010 had been unusually high and that the fall in levels of attainment at KS2 reflected this. However, it was recognised that this was an area that required further attention. The council did assist in the dissemination of good practice and the head teachers of high performing schools were invited to discuss as a group what it was that they felt made a difference. Often however, this could be hard to identify as a key element in the success of a school was good leadership. A website had been set up to share good practice and all schools that performed well were invited to contribute. This website had not been particularly successful thus far. There was no recognisable trend between better performing schools, their locality or concentration of ethnic or FSM groups. Family involvement was a key element of raising pupil achievement however, and considerable work was carried out with schools, supplementary schools and at a borough level to address this issue. This work had been particularly successful in engaging Somali families but had been less successful with Black Caribbean families. With regard to careers advisers in schools, until April 2012 the local authority had held the statutory responsibility for this provision; this was now the responsibility of each school but all Brent schools, except one, had chosen to purchase this service via the council.

Ms Cooper commented that there needed to be a further breakdown of the White Other grouping as this may help to identify issues associated with particular ethnic groups and allow for better targeted action. Naureen Kauser advised that the group was very diverse and efforts would be made in conjunction with schools to unpick this group further; however, it was recognised that some ethnic groups within this group would be very small.

Councillor Arnold commented that it was also important for members to recognise the progress achieved and celebrate high performing schools. Naureen Kauser added that there had been significant improvement in the education attainment of Somalian pupils and the numbers of exclusions had been halved.

RESOLVED

- i. That the report be noted.
- ii. That the continuing improvements in education standards be noted
- iii. That the contribution made by Services to Schools be noted.

7. Update on School Expansion Programme to provide additional school places.

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director, Achievement and Inclusion) presented a report updating the committee on the School expansion Programme. There remained an acute shortage of school places in Brent, despite the provision of additional places over the past 5 years, including 1800 in the primary sector, and it was expected that this would continue in the medium to long-term. Recent favourable capital settlements received by the council would help to alleviate the situation but were not sufficient to enable demand for school places to be met. In total, the council had received approximately £80m in capital settlements between October 2011 and April 2012. With reference to the table setting out the Capital Programme allocation, Rik Boxer highlighted that the £27m of resources identified for 2011/12 had been or would be spent on existing schemes that have delivered new classroom spaces for the 2011/12 academic year.

At present, the pressure was principally on primary school sector but it was recognised that this would move through the system to come to bear on the secondary sector in the near future. Despite the on-going programme of temporary and permanent expansion, there currently remained a need to create up to 16 additional Reception classes to ensure that every child has a place. This was a London-wide issue and all of the neighbouring boroughs to Brent were opening additional Reception classes for September 2012. In Brent, the expansion programme for September 2012 was largely focussed on temporary projects. The council continued to lobby central government, in conjunction with London Councils, to highlight the school places pressure. Officers in Regeneration and Major Projects were currently undertaking a review of the entire school assets portfolio to ascertain potential for further permanent and temporary expansions across the whole of Brent schools. The results of this would be reported to the Executive in August 2012 alongside plans and priorities for Phase 2 of the expansion of schools in the medium term.

Similar pressures to those faced in the primary sector were also being faced by the SEN sector and an extensive programme to expand in-borough SEN provision had been agreed and was fully incorporated into the overall capital programme.

In the subsequent discussion members raised several issues. Councillor Al-Ebadi noted that the priority must be for a child to be able to receive an education and queried whether the local authority could place pressure on parents who repeatedly refused school places due to their preference for a particular schools place. He further noted that additional pressure on school places was likely to arise as a result of changes to housing benefit which would result in more people moving into Brent. Councillor Pavey queried whether options such as virtual schools had been considered by the council. He further queried whether Section 106 funds could be used for general school expansion and development projects or were limited to use in a particular location. Councillor Choudhary commented that if infant class sizes were expanded over the limit of 30 places per class, this would enable the local authority to meet the current demand for school places.

Rik Boxer advised that unfortunately the council could not always meet parental preference or offer a school place in a convenient location and this could cause

practical difficulties for a family. It was important that parents were made aware of the pressure on school places and the reduced likelihood of gaining a place in a preferred school so that they could make an appropriately informed decision regarding an offer of a school place. Subsequent reports to the committee could identify where offers had been made to parents and had been refused. If there were repeated refusals of school places the council could pass the case to the non-attendance team; however, such measures would have to be weighed against the reasonableness of the action and it was hoped that an acceptable solution could be reached before this. Councillor Arnold commented that perhaps some work could be carried out with community groups to support families in mitigating some of the practical difficulties in having a child in an inconveniently located school. Councillor Al-Ebadi advised that this issue could be raised via the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum. Rik Boker added that with regard to the changes to housing benefit, officers were working with colleagues in housing; however it would be difficult to accurately assess the implications of these changes.

Turning to Councillor Pavey's query regarding virtual schools, Rik Boxer advised that this was not a favoured option and was rather a useful supplementary provision in certain circumstances. The option had been explored for some young people who had been excluded or were unable to attend school. The limits on Section 106 funding were dependent on the case in question but generally the funds were restricted to use on the site being developed. With regard to the infant class size limit, this was statutory and there were only very few circumstances in which the local authority was legally allowed to exceed this figure. Furthermore there were financial implications of doing so and schools had indicated that they would not be in favour of such options due to the impact on the quality of the education that could be provided. Ms Cooper added that the individual attention that each child could receive from the qualified teacher would be reduced if class sizes were to exceed 30 pupils per class. Rajesh Sinha (Interim Programme Manager) further noted that the physical size of many classrooms prohibited such action.

Ms Cooper sought further details regarding the Free School application for a small Christian primary school for 210 pupils and particularly queried whether these places would only be open to pupils of the Christian faith. Rik Boxer advised that many faith schools had quite open admissions policies; however there were no further details known about the application for the Free School at present. These details had been passed to the local authority by the Department for Education (DfE). The council was looking at the supply and demand for faith based schools and was working with these schools to encourage more inclusive admissions policies. Work was also taking place to better understand parental preference and demand for different types of school places.

Mrs Gouldbourne noted that the council was exploring the potential for working with free school providers and queried when the Teacher's union would be engaged in these discussions. Councillor Arnold advised that a draft set of criteria had been drawn up but that these were yet to be approved and the trade union would be involved in the process. Rik Boxer added that the criteria would need to include a commitment to raising education standards and having qualified staff. Ms Cooper commented that the Teacher's union should be involved whilst the criteria are being formulated. Councillor Arnold advised that she would take this on board and feed this back.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. **Items from the Forward Plan and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

Priya Mistry (Policy and Performance Officer) advised that the Safeguarding and LAC children Action plan and Adoption Inspection update would be on the agenda for the next meeting. In addition the committee made the following suggestions for the committee's work programme: -

- Councillor Pavey requested a report on the implementation of the Restructure of the Children's Centres;
- Councillor Pavey also requested an update on the outcomes of the early intervention task group;
- Mrs Gouldbourne suggested that the committee consider a report on the educational benefits of all through schools.

The committee was reminded that any further suggestions could be passed to the Chair or to Priya Mistry.

9. **Date of next meeting**

The committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 19 July 2012.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

CLLR B CHEESE
Chair