

# **CHILDREN'S HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2015**

PRESENT:- Councillors Gemma McCracken (Chair), Michael Bray, John Haines, Cathy Martyn, Teresa Page, James Robbins, Eric Shaw, Carol Shelley, Nadine Watts, Steve Weisinger and Robert Wright, Paul Sunners (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education), Valerie Johnstone (Governor), Jo Garton (Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers), Alison Paul (Swindon Association of Special Schools Headteachers), Liz Townend (Bristol Diocese) and Mary Cosker (Healthwatch).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fionuala Foley, Maureen Penny and Julie Wright, David Dawson (Catholic Diocese), Kevin McNamara (Great Western Hospital), Dr Wendy Wodhouse (Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust).

## **18. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor James Robbins declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as he was a Foster Carer.

Councillors Nadine Watts, James Robbins and Gemma McCracken and Mr Paul Sunners declared personal and non-prejudicial interests as they were school governors.

## **19. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **20. Public Question Time**

No public questions were asked or submitted for this meeting.

## **21. Education Standards and Performance Report**

The Board Director, Commissioning and the Head of Education submitted a joint report setting out the achievements of Swindon children and young people in their public assessments in primary and secondary schools.

Mr Peter Nathan, Head of Education explained that the report highlighted improvements in performance and areas for development. He advised that performance was measured against national averages and the report included data regarding attendance and behaviour which could be an indicator of pupil and school performance.

Mr Peter Nathan introduced Ms Sarah Foulkes, Commissioner for Education and Mr Nigel Pickering, Additional Provision and Regeneration Manager. He explained that at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment had risen in all subjects.

Members noted the difference in attainment for disadvantaged pupils and that at Key Stage 2 girls attained a higher standard than boys. He commented on the Ofsted Inspection Framework that had changed over recent years and that a new Framework was implemented with effect from September 2015.

Mr Peter Nathan referred to school exclusions and attendance and explained that attendance was above the national average for both primary and secondary schools. Fixed term exclusions had increased over the past years and that together with the Local Swindon Safeguarding Board, the Local Authority partnered with schools to address this.

The Committee welcomed the improvements in 2014/15 and Mr Peter Nathan, Ms Sarah Foulkes, Mr Nigel Pickering and Mr John Gilbert, Board Director Commissioning, responded to questions put by members regarding the following points:

- Addressing the disadvantage relating to the attainment gap particularly as this widened when pupils progressed from primary to secondary schools and how Pupil Premium Funding helped in narrowing the gap. The Committee noted the following factors that were relevant to the attainment gap:
  - (a) socio-economic factors;
  - (b) how the pupil premium was utilised to raise pupil attainment, particularly those receiving free school meals;
  - (c) how information relating to pupil premium expenditure was available on schools' websites;
  - (d) work undertaken by schools to reduce the gap; and
  - (e) proposed work to be undertaken by the virtual head teacher to address narrowing the attainment gap.
- How to utilise pupil premium funding. Members enquired if Pupil Premium Funding could be utilised solely for the child attracting the funding and how this was applied by other authorities. Members noted that Appendix 7 of the report indicated a narrowing in the disadvantaged attainment gap, particularly at Key Stage 2 and that schools were allowed to use Pupil Premium Funding as they saw fit to ensure the attainment gap narrowed. In response to a query regarding national standards, Ms Jo Garton (Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers) referred to the work being undertaken in primary schools to narrow the attainment gap.
- The type of support, particularly through Traded Services, available to assist academies.
- The effect of pupils with English as an Additional Language on schools' performance. Members noted that this was not an issue in Swindon schools and nationally, pupils with English as an additional language outperformed their peers in the range of subjects studied.
- Discussions undertaken with the Regional Schools Commissioner regarding schools' performance.
- The importance of strong leadership in schools.
- Local Authority Ranking as reflected in Appendix 5 (Provisional Key Stage 4 results). Members noted that as with Ofsted practices, Swindon ranked itself against other local authorities.
- Why the level of attainment fell between Key Stages 2 and 4 and actions being taken to address this. Mr Peter Nathan confirmed that various factors may affect a pupil's progress such as the quality of teaching and change in personal circumstances. He elaborated on

discussions undertaken with schools to address this, particularly raising pupils' aspirations.

- Awareness that a number of Swindon pupils study out of Borough and statistics relating to their performance was unavailable.
- Confirmation that Academy Schools were autonomous. Mr Peter Nathan referred to the working relationship with academies, including the Teaching School. Members noted that all academies worked in different ways and that working as part of a cluster offered various opportunities to improve performance.
- Schools attendance at events that enabled networking opportunities.
- Understanding the importance of parents' involvement within the school community.
- Behavioural Policies and how these can contribute in the reduction of exclusions.
- Confirmation of how the Fair Access Panel provided strong guidance to pupils and schools.
- Strategies being implemented to reduce the number of exclusions in special schools.
- Clarity on the behavioural strategy utilised for Looked After Children.

Resolved: (1) That the Head of Education be thanked for his informative report.

(2) That the Head of Education be requested to circulate attainment data reflected by school type, particularly reflecting where academies were stand alone or part of a trust.

(3) That the Elected Member of the Youth Parliament be requested to circulate information regarding her campaign, "Raising Aspiration".

(4) That the Head of Education be requested to circulate exclusion data for Looked After Children.

## **22. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reform Task Group Update**

Mr Paul Sunners, the Chair of the SEND Reform Task Group, reported on the progress of the Task Group to date. He referred to the importance of member's attendance and collaboration, and to the discussions held at the meetings. The Chair thanked Mr Sunners and the task group for their work and advised that the Committee looked forward to their report and recommendations in April 2016.

Resolved – That progress made by the SEND Task group, be noted.

## **23. Work Programme 2015\_16**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report concerning a work programme detailing the activities that the Committee would be undertaking during the forthcoming Municipal Year, with the aim of producing evidence based recommendations intended to provide service improvements for Cabinet and external agencies/bodies to consider.

Resolved – That the report be noted.