

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FORUM

MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Phillip Bicknell (Chairman), Marion Mills and Edward Wilson

Also in attendance: Richard Allen and Joe Sparks, Co-Head Teachers of the Green Room School.

Officers: Wendy Binmore and Kevin McDaniel

APOLOGIES

None.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting of the Windsor Urban Development Control Panel held on 21 September 2015 be approved.

OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHURCHMEAD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Councillor E. Wilson gave a brief overview of the progress made by Churchmead CE School. He stated the school was not in a good way and there were issues with behaviour, there were huge variations in attainment with no head teacher or governing body. In order to turn the school around, they needed a new head teacher with a god work ethic which had helped to turn the school around in a very short space of time. Initially there was a huge list of things to do which included a lack of sixth form offer and 80% of students attending from Slough.

Councillor Wilson stated the Ofsted report showed the head teacher had worked incredibly hard and the school had changed their offer as a small secondary school. There were also some outstanding elements at Churchmead with a lot of sustainable changes; in particular attainment levels and progress in children previously being graded E or U grades, now being graded C grades and that was impressive in such a short space of time. He added he had written to a local newspaper to encourage people to take a look at Churchmead for their children, particularly those from Wraysbury.

Councillor Wilson attended Churchmead's Sixth Form open evening which was a collaboration between Churchmead and East Berkshire College. Over 75 children had applied to the sixth form so the school had managed to go from having no sixth form at all to a fully functioning sixth form. So far the results of the changes were very encouraging and Councillor Wilson stated he could not see a reason why the school would be outstanding in two to three years time.

The Chairman commented that what the school and the head teacher had achieved was outstanding and in the near future the school itself would also be considered as outstanding by Ofsted; it was a school to be watched moving forward.

Councillor Wilson explained that one issue the school had was the number of children with English as a second language attending. A number of the children would be registered for an

exam but then leave the school before sitting the exam. This left the school with a loss of attainment at GCSE level but, he was confident that had been addressed.

Councillor Wilson stated the vocational side of the curriculum at the school came through strongly and they were about to launch a football academy; in collaboration with East Berkshire College, qualifications in that area would be offered. He added a further area the school was extremely good at was photography and media which allowed children that did not fit the academic stream to do very well with fantastic outcomes.

The school managed to improve basic things such as the head teacher being at the school gates, ensuring the school was being cleaned properly and their accident book to be kept up to date. Councillor Wilson suggested the head teacher at Churchmead speak to other head teachers in the Borough. The head teacher at Churchmead had been on a journey and was potentially inspirational for other heads in the Borough. He would encourage the head teacher to attend a future Forum meeting to explain how he managed to turn the school around without extra funding.

The Chairman confirmed he had aspirations of inviting head teachers to share their ways forward and how they had achieved their successes. He requested the head teacher be congratulated and he wished him all the best. He also stated that if the head teacher required anything to keep moving forward and raising standards, the Borough would do all it could to help where it could. Kevin McDaniel, Head of Schools and Educational Services commented that he had been reading Ofsted reports for ten years and it was great to see such improvement in all areas, especially at the disadvantaged end of the school.

THE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT LANDSCAPE

Kevin McDaniel, Head of Schools and Educational Services stated he had visited 51 mainstream and free schools since he began working at the Borough. He had held a first meeting with head teachers and governors on 20 January 2016 with more than 70 head teachers and leaders in the room talking about how to address issues raised. There was a huge willingness to work collaboratively with schools and a willingness to do more in a collaborative way. Kevin McDaniel had had a good discussion on how the Borough might modify the approach of how things had always been done. There was a suggestion to have just a couple of days monitoring for good and outstanding schools and up to 10 days monitoring for schools that were struggling. Schools were under pressure to make rapid changes that they wanted the Borough to broker the best way forward for experts to share their knowledge. He added he needed to look at how, as a Local Authority, the Council set up resources to help schools.

Kevin McDaniel stated the next step was to identify resources and was supported at the Forum by teaching schools. He was please to hear that schools were happy to work with all levels of schools, such as First, Middle and Primary schools etc. The Chairman commented that with schools transferring to academies, the budget for school improvement was reducing. In response, Kevin McDaniel confirmed there was a designated schools grant from central government which the Council distributed to all schools in the Royal Borough and there was a smaller pot of money, the educational support grant which was additional funding but, that had been reduced and would be reduced further by central government. The Local Authority had ring fenced the budgets so the Council could continue to support schools that had been improving and that continued to improve. Kevin McDaniel was confident there would be enough money in the shrinking budgets to make a difference to schools in the Borough.

Councillor E. Wilson stated some Local Authorities took the Educational Support Grant budget and used it to outsource services. However, there was no one size fits all approach as Churchmead required help with maths but not English; he was sure if the Borough asked what the need was from the Local Authority, the Local Authority could help.

Kevin McDaniel confirmed the Pupil Premium funding went directly to schools and they the schools had a statutory requirement to report information on how they were spending their Pupil Premium funding on their websites. National research showed that schools spent the money in various ways and it did not go on the same things. He added there was approximately 42 things that the Pupil Premium could be spent on such as buying washing machines to clean uniforms, music and sports groups for after school. The schools needed to recognise what the areas of need were in their school.

In terms of gifted and talented children, Kevin McDaniel confirmed that most schools had gifted and talented groups and the Borough did ask schools about their activities. There was such a variety of extra curricular activity within the Royal Borough. All head teachers made some areas available in their curriculum and also at extra curricular activity levels. There was a lot happening in that area, the Borough just needed to keep asking the schools for updates.

- ❖ **Action:** Kevin McDaniel to provide a table showing how schools in the Borough were spending their Pupil Premium funding and a separate table showing what schools offered their gifted and talented cohort.

VISIT FROM CO-HEADS OF THE GREEN ROOM SCHOOL

Richard Allen and Joe Sparks, co-head teachers at the Green Room School, Windsor attended the Forum to give an insight into how their school worked and how their approach to schooling had been successful. They wanted the Borough to know they were not in competition with any of the Council's schools but rather, they wanted to work with and collaborate with schools to help pupils remain in mainstream school and access mainstream education.

Joe Sparks explained that the Green Room School was a different type of school and that they were very good at what they did. He stated the school was dedicated to giving children that had either been excluded from school or who refused to attend mainstream school, a chance at receiving an education that they otherwise would not have received. He added that he believed in mainstream education and he had given a lot of talks to schools which explained it was a mistake to try and make all children the same and that it was ok to be different; head teachers that worked with the Green Room would ask them for advice.

Compared to other special schools, the Green Room was cheaper and the more children they could take on, the cheaper the service would get. The Local Authority provided funding for the school when it was already too late and Joe explained he could help the Council spend funding better and more cost effectively by working with the Green Room.

Joe gave a description of the work they did at the Green Room which included the following key points:

- The school concentrated on three main areas which were: social, therapeutic and educational.
- The school had an onsite therapist which was very important as CAMHS were struggling to meet demand and their service was overstretched.
- It often took 18 months or longer to get a diagnosis from CAMHS, whereas the Green Room embraced everything with or without a diagnosis.
- The therapeutic offer in mainstream schools was not good enough and the Green Room was there when things went wrong and then they would get children back into their lessons.
- The Green Room took on family and friends in helping children access education.
- In terms of working academically, they had a boy with a low attendance record. The Green Room approach was to get him into lessons, so when he came into school, the Green Room got him into therapy.
- They had one simple rule and that was the children have to want to be there; that was the whole point.

The Chairman stated the Borough had sent some of its pupils to the Green Room School. Joe confirmed they were at full capacity and there was a waiting list. He added they had opened an outreach service but, it would not work as the purpose was to get children into school. There were two children at their school they felt they should never have met but things had gone wrong in mainstream school and the Green Room worked with them when it was too late.

Joe Sparks confirmed that the Borough's schools did do a fantastic job but, there were some children that were unable to do mainstream school. That should not be a problem but, he could not understand why staying in mainstream schools was seen as a reward. The children that used the Green room School did not use their circumstances as an excuse; children saw them as an opportunity to make changes for themselves.

Councillor E Wilson stated he had watched the Green Room develop and always thought it needed to be bigger. He felt the situation had been almost forcing people into a room with the co-heads from the Green Room and not a lot of collaborative conversation had taken place. Cllr Wilson felt it was a conversation that had to happen. Richard Allen confirmed the Green Room did have a plan and that there had been a lot of interest from Surrey Council in the way they taught their pupils at the Green Room. They had a specific way of staffing and they wanted teachers who were disillusioned with the current education system but not with teaching. The Green Room used dogs and they would like to have a farm setting and that would be used along side the traditional academic methods. The Chairman stated he would like to address funding issues with the Green Room. Councillor Mills stated she was on the committee for a couple of youth clubs and it had only been in recent years the committees had been able to deal with self-esteem and anger issues. Joe Sparks commented the youth workers in Windsor and Maidenhead were the best he had seen.

- ❖ **Action:** Kevin McDaniel, Head of Schools and Educational Services to add the Green Room School's plan to the forward plan.

Email contact details for the Green Room – info@thegreenroomschool.com

ESTABLISHING THE FORWARD PLAN

- Alternative Provision – collaboration with the Green Room School.
- Collaboration with mainstream schools.
- Safeguarding and Child Sexual Exploitation – schools approach.
- Expanding schools.
- Find out which school is next on the list for an Ofsted.

Things to be done for future meetings:

- Co-opting of head teachers or deputy-heads onto the Forum
- Build on conversation which took place at the School Improvement Forum on 1 February 2016 on intervention and children needing help.
- Kevin McDaniel, Head of Schools and Educational Services to find out why it took so long to obtain a diagnosis for children under CAMHS

The meeting, which began at 4.00 pm, finished at 5.37 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....