

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FORUM

MONDAY, 13 JUNE 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Stuart Carroll (Chairman), David Coppinger (Vice-Chairman) and John Baldwin

Also in attendance: Councillor Mandy Brar, Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor Maureen Hunt and Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Jo Capon, Helen Daniels, Navroop Mehat and Sarah Cottle

Officers: Mark Beeley, Clive Haines, Kelly Nash and Helen Huntley

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Del Campo. Councillor Baldwin was attending the meeting as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

LIFE POST PANDEMIC IN SCHOOLS

Jo Capon, acting Headteacher at Newlands Girls School, explained what life had been like at the school since the pandemic. The main priority had been to keep the site safe and there had been teachers positioned on the front gate at the start and end of school each day. While this had been introduced during the pandemic, this was something that the school would be looking to continue with. Newlands was a different place now as more things started to resume but there had been an increase in anxiety, students needed the school in a different way to before. Staff were starting to see an increase in the number of safeguarding issues and a wellbeing practitioner had been employed to help deal with any issues. Newlands was prepared for the exams which were currently being sat by students in the key year groups, with additional tutoring money being utilised to help bridge gaps in education. Jo Capon concluded by saying that Covid levels at the school were currently very low. Newlands felt like a positive place and the school was already looking ahead to September, it was important to ensure that all students were supported with their mental health and wellbeing.

Helen Daniels, Headteacher at Cookham Rise Primary School, said that staffing at the school had been easier compared to any point across the rest of the year, things were in a much better place now. In reception and year 1, it was clear that there were some children struggling with socialising and communication. In year 2, there were gaps in writing. The pandemic had a wide effect on children, affecting their mental health while there had also been an increase in the number of eating disorders.

Sarah Cottle, Co-Headteacher of the Nursery Federation of Windsor and Maidenhead, felt that there had been a lot of celebration at being back in school. A priority of early years was making sure that key skills were up to standard, this was a generation of children that had been born during the pandemic and therefore might not have had the same socialising

opportunities to those born earlier. It was clear that some children were lacking communication and language skills but they were now able to communicate and talk to people from outside of their household. Sarah Cottle mentioned that early years had been left out of the Covid recovery package which had been introduced by the government, however this would now be funded from September 2022.

The Chairman asked what the package from the government would include.

Sarah Cottle explained that the Department for Education had asked the local authority to nominate people as an area lead, experts and mentors. The area lead would lead, the experts would go into identified settings where there had been a need identified to work along practitioners. The mentoring would be done remotely to help support teams.

The Chairman commented on the mental health and anxiety of young people. He asked which interventions had been working well in school settings.

Helen Daniels said that most schools in the borough had ELSA (Emotional Learning and Support Assistants). More time and money was being prioritised and to provide support for families too, all schools had been offered access to mental health training.

Jo Capon said that there was a staff member who was currently moving onto the mental health lead programme. Newlands used newsletters and weekly bulletins to communicate more with parents, the format of these had been changed to make them more informative.

Councillor Baldwin believed that the central funding for early years would be £153 million spread over two years. He was unsure how much would actually filter down to a local level, there was a strict criteria for the various roles that were part of the scheme. Councillor Baldwin asked if there would be any challenges in filling these positions.

Sarah Cottle said that four or five settings had been identified so far and they were able to be self-referred. Nominations to the area lead needed to have Qualified Teacher Status, the Department for Education felt that these teachers would be able to better support and understand child development. Sarah Cottle said that she had to go through an application and interview process, the settings being supported were not always in the borough.

Clive Haines, Associate Director for Education, added that it was entirely run by the Department for Education and was not controlled by the council. Communication could be made with mentors in the area. The area lead was someone from our area.

Councillor Baldwin noted that Jo Capon had mentioned a music concert taking place over the next month at the school.

Jo Capon said that she would ensure that ticket details were advertised, they would be going on sale shortly.

Clive Haines said that he was happy to make the connection between Councillor Baldwin and the tickets for the show at Newlands.

Councillor Coppinger said that much of the focus on the educational impact of the pandemic had been on older children, many people had forgotten about the mental health and the impact of the youngest in society.

Helen Huntley, School Improvement Team – SEND Consultant, mentioned the ERSA (Emotionally Related School Avoidance) tool kit. This was a cohort of young people who struggled to leave home. A working party had created the toolkit which could be used by schools and was aimed at children who were not attending due to things like anxiety.

The Chairman passed on his thanks to all the teachers for their work and professionalism throughout the pandemic.

ALL SAINTS JUNIOR SCHOOL UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Clive Haines said that in January 2022 there had been a change of leadership at All Saints Junior School. Six weeks after the change of leadership, an Ofsted inspection took place and there were two areas the school was deemed inadequate, the quality of the education and the leadership. A statement of action was completed, particularly around early reading for children and that SEND children were not receiving adequate support. There was also an overreliance on RBWM from the school. The council had appointed an Executive Headteacher on an interim basis, who reported to a strategic board and the progress that had been made so far was pleasing.

Navroop Mehat, Interim Executive Headteacher at All Saints, said that with SEND children, they were now being well supported. Teachers could plan and scaffold up so that all children would achieve the same as their peers. SEND plans had been reviewed and sent to parents. The curriculum had seen improvements and was sequenced, teachers were now following this in their planning. Looking forward, there needed to be better links with local infant schools which had been done. The strategic board had been really helpful and had provided great support to staff. On early reading, there was a strong phonic programme in place which children took part in every day. Those that were struggling would gain extra support. Resources had been purchased by the school to help bridge the link between phonics and free reader. Children were now encouraged to read a book and then engage in a digital quiz to help aid their understanding. Navroop Mehat concluded by saying that the staff at the school had been excellent and All Saints Junior School was in a good place to move forward.

The Chairman asked how parents were updated on the progress being made to improve the school.

Navroop Mehat said that weekly newsletters were sent out, each one focused on a specific area. Parents were asked for feedback to make the newsletter and communication better. Staff were also visible in the playground at pick up and drop off times which also allowed parents to share their concerns with the school.

Councillor Baldwin asked for clarification, as he had heard both a strategic board and a steering board mentioned. He also asked if an intervention was required by the Department for Education.

Clive Haines confirmed it was the same thing, intervention was required as the governing body was deemed ineffective to hold the school to account.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the school would be able to return to a governor committee.

Clive Haines said that it would, a new board had been created by the Department for Education who were working with the council to improve the school. The school would go through the chosen academy trust, rather than a school controlled by the local authority.

Clive Haines concluded the update by informing Members that the Board had received a lot of positive parent feedback. The Board were happy with the progress that had been made and were hopeful that Ofsted would feel the same.

The Chairman said it was a priority to see progress and it was good to hear the positive steps that had been made. He suggested that this agenda item should be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum.

GREEN PAPER - WHAT THIS MEANS

Helen Huntley explained that the green paper had come out one day after the white paper in March 2022.

Kelly Nash said that in the paper, it regarded the current system as a 'vicious cycle' and that there were poor outcomes for people with SEND. Around 75% of children with SEND did not receive adequate support in early years or at the end of KS2. There were delays accessing services and therefore needs were not being identified quickly enough. There was a lack of collaboration between schools, the authority and families, the current system was unsustainable. The paper was currently at consultation stage, with this due to close on 1st July. A SEND delivery plan would be published later in the year, setting out the government's response to the consultation.

The key changes to schools included:

- New national standards for how needs were identified and met.
- SEND Code of Practice was to be reviewed.
- Developing a "what works" evidence base programme to share good practice.
- Increase in places via additional capital investment.
- Focus on improved training for all teachers and a new SENCo qualification.
- Specialist provision and Alternative Provision to be a part of a Trust by 2030.

Key changes for the local authority included:

- Establishing a new local SEND partnership.
- LA to be held to account for its SEND provision through new funding.
- Arrangements with new DfE Regional groups.
- New statutory guidance to Integrated Care Boards.
- New SEND Dashboards to be introduced.
- Introducing a standardised and digitised Education Health and Care Plan process.
- Review of the Early Years Inclusion Fund and the SEND national funding.

Key changes for young people and families included:

- Support for parents to express an informed preference.
- Streamlining the redress process through mandatory mediation.
- Fund more than 10,000 additional respite places.
- Developing the supported internship programme.

Kelly Nash said that the local authority had submitted a collective response to the consultation, schools and Councillors were encouraged to also submit responses.

Clive Haines said that the green paper was aligned to the council's five year strategy, the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had increased due to the pandemic. Officers were generally supportive of what was being proposed as part of the green paper.

Kelly Nash said that plans for EHCPs to go digital would reduce the bureaucracy for those involved in the process.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the slides from the presentation could be circulated to Members of the Forum.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to circulate the presentation to Members of the Forum after the meeting.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 13th October 2022, starting at 5pm.

The meeting, which began at 5.00 pm, finished at 6.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....