

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FORUM

THURSDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Stuart Carroll (Chairman), David Coppinger (Vice-Chairman) and Catherine Del Campo

Also in attendance: Councillor Sayonara Luxton, Councillor John Baldwin, Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor Maureen Hunt and Navroop Mehat (All Saints Junior School)

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

PROVISIONAL DATA FOR ALL PHASES

Clive Haines, Deputy Director for Education, talked through the provisional data for all school phases. Each phase received a percentage rating, which considered the level of development and progress. A summary of the progress made:

- In early years, 67% showed a good level of development, compared to 65% nationally.
- For phonics in year 1, 74% were working at standard, compared to 75% nationally.
 - This was a significant decline from 2019, due to the Covid lockdown.
 - RBWM was currently rated 99th on the local authority league table.
- For disadvantaged pupils, progress on phonics for year 1, 52% were working at standard. This was compared to 62% nationally.
- For KS1, reading was at 69% (67% nationally), writing was at 59% (58% nationally) and maths was at 68% (also 68% nationally).
- For disadvantaged pupils in KS1, reading was at 44% (51% nationally), writing was at 31% (41% nationally) and maths was at 45% (52% nationally).
- For KS2, 63% were meeting the expected standard, compared to 59% nationally.
 - RBWM was placed in the top quintile of local authorities for KS2 and was also joint second in the south east local authority league table.
- For disadvantaged pupils in KS2, 38% were meeting the expected standard, compared to 43% nationally.
 - The disadvantage gap was at its highest level nationally since 2012.
- For GCSE results, 78% of pupils received an English and Maths at grade 4 or above in 2022, this was an increase on previous years.
- A Level results were broken down by each school.

The Chairman noted the significant dip in KS1 phonics, both in RBWM and at a national level. He asked if this was all due to the pandemic, or if there were other factors which also had an impact on development.

Clive Haines explained that the pandemic had made development of phonics difficult as it was one of the most difficult things to teach online. Research which had been done so far in schools had showed that children were starting to catch up on their phonics development. Clive Haines hoped to bring a report to the School Improvement Forum once he had received the finalised data.

The Chairman asked if this was the same issue for writing.

Clive Haines confirmed that it was, children needed to be in school to properly develop their writing skills.

Navroop Mehat, All Saints Junior School, said that reading had been encouraged at home during lockdown but phonics and writing suffered. However, she believed it would pick up again now that children were back in school.

Councillor Del Campo asked if the phonics test was to understand the baseline of children coming into the school.

Clive Haines clarified it was a standardised test that needed to be done and was not used for benchmarking purposes. The test could be used to identify which children needed additional support.

Navroop Mehat added that it was a 'moment in time' test, it was to ensure that children were getting the right phonic sounds.

Councillor Del Campo asked if RBWM had compared the data to other neighbouring local authorities which had a similar demographic makeup.

Clive Haines said that comparisons were made both nationally and with the south east region. Benchmarking was now done at reception.

Councillor Del Campo said that nationally there were very different authorities, she asked if comparisons could be made with similar authorities to RBWM.

Clive Haines said it would be useful to do a comparison on this, particularly when comparing the disadvantaged pupil data.

Councillor Del Campo commented on the GCSE results, 1 in 4 pupils were not achieving at least a grade 4 in the two core subjects, English and Maths. She asked if this was a concern.

Clive Haines said it was not a concern, grade 4 was the median and a number of pupils were well above this grade too.

Kelly Nash added that a number of schools had creative pathways for pupils who did not achieve the pass grade, schools were being innovative to ensure that things like vocational courses could be accessed.

Councillor Del Campo asked why Furze Platt Secondary School had not reported their results.

Clive Haines said it was the schools choice to report results as they were an academy.

Councillor Coppinger asked if the data on Holyport College was regarding day pupils or if it was all pupils.

Clive Haines did not have that information, but he would find out.

ACTION – Clive Haines to find out whether the data referred to day pupils or those that were boarding at Holyport College.

Councillor Baldwin noted that exam results in RBWM were better than the national average, he wondered if there was a specific reason why this was the case.

Clive Haines said that catching up was done at KS4, accessibility and monitoring could be a reason why.

The Chairman asked when the full finalised data would be ready.

He was told that this was expected in December.

ALL SAINTS JUNIOR SCHOOL

Navroop Mehat updated the Forum on progress made at All Saints. A visit had recently been made by an individual who was interested in working at the school, she was really impressed by the value staff placed on the curriculum. Navroop Mehat shared data from the Year 6 SAT results, which were pleasing on the whole. The writing quality would improve as the current cohort had a number of pieces of writing to work on. A phonics consultant had been brought in as a concern had been the number of children who required phonics in Year 2 and Year 3. There was no longer a phonics need in the school, all children who required phonics support after Year 3 were pupils that were new to the school. Behaviour remained good and it was a shame that there had been a slight drop in numbers due to the 'inadequate' rating. Navroop Mehat appealed for help promoting the school, particularly as significant improvements and progress had been made.

The Chairman asked about staff morale and the reaction from them to the changes that had been made to improve the school.

Navroop Mehat said that staff were on board with the journey, they were all committed to changing the school for the better. The school needed to find someone permanent to take the school forward, it was important that whoever was appointed understood that stability was key.

Clive Haines said that work was being done closely with the chosen sponsor of the school to ensure that the rapid improvement continued.

Councillor Del Campo thanked Navroop Mehat for all her work and wished the school all the best for the Ofsted inspection.

Councillor Baldwin said that he regularly spoke to parents of children at All Saints, they also had positive things to say about the leadership and the changes which had come in. He thanked Navroop Mehat and all her staff for their work.

Councillor Bhangra said that he had attended All Saints when he was young, therefore the school was personally important to him. He was pleased to see the excellent progress which had been made. Councillor Bhangra asked what the school needed to do to ensure that it continued to improve.

Navroop Mehat said that long term there was a plan in place and that the school needed to meet the targets which had been set by Ofsted. A good curriculum was in place and middle leaders had been developed. After the first year, the new head would be able to work on specific skills from the same plan. Ofsted could direct different things so the priorities could change. The strategic board worked closely with the school and they were very aware of what was going on.

Councillor Hunt asked how many SEN children attended All Saints.

Navroop Mehat said that there were around 15 children across the school, this had been highlighted as part of the Ofsted report that improvements to support for SEN children could be made.

The Chairman said that it was important that improvements were seen and it was great to see the progress made and the positive comments that so many people had about the school. All Saints deserved to get back to where it had been.

5 YEAR SEND STRATEGY AND OVERARCHING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Kelly Nash, Area SENCO for Achieving for Children, outlined the consultation process for the strategy. Two online meetings had been hosted with parents and carers with a total of 84 parents requesting a place. A participation day had been organised at Windsor Youth Centre to hear young people's thoughts on SEND provision. A conference was also held at Moor Hall, with over 40 key stakeholders in attendance. The vision statement for RBWM was that every child "will be happy, healthy and achieve their fullest potential." All children and young people were entitled to an education that enabled them to progress. The strategy included the mission statement and how RBWM would achieve the priorities set out in the strategy. Priorities of the strategy included:

- Young people with SEND and their families were the experts in understanding their child's needs.
- Children and young people with SEND to be identified earlier and immediate action would be taken.
- All RBWM mainstream provision would be welcoming, accessible and inclusive to all so that they could meet the vast majority of children and young people who have special education needs.
- An increased focus on earlier targeted and multi-agency intervention to offer help and meet needs at the earliest opportunity.
- Development of the right range of specialist provision to ensure that as many young people as possible could be educated in a local educational setting.
- Young people with SEND would be helped to become confident so that they could lead independent and fulfilling lives in their local communities.

Kelly Nash and Helen Huntley outlined the workstreams and activities which had taken place to support these priorities.

The Chairman commented on the inclusion ambassadors and asked for some detail on who the ambassadors were.

Kelly Nash explained that there were currently seven inclusion ambassadors, it was important to hear from and build links with young people and that they were representing their setting and peers. Ambassadors were also able to work towards a qualification as part of their role.

The Chairman asked what the timeline was for the implementation of the priorities from the strategy.

Helen Huntley said that work was being done with the Parent Carer Forum, the strategy was planned across five years and therefore the Forum needed to decide which elements should be a priority. Some priorities needed to be led by other teams, while other priorities were time limited. There was an aim to have parents, carers and practitioners on the various work streams which had been planned around the main priorities of the strategy.

Councillor Del Campo noted that priority four considered early intervention, she felt this was a vital priority. The waiting list time for CAMHS was an issue and children who needed support needed to be added to the waiting list at the earliest opportunity. Another priority was that children and families were 'experts', she broadly agreed with this statement but this was not always true. It was pleasing to see proposals of investment across the borough and it would be great to have an ambassador presence in every school in RBWM.

Kelly Nash said that schools were encouraged to be needs-led, the team could signpost schools very quickly if needed.

Councillor Hunt said it was an excellent strategy. She shared the experience of a resident who needed additional support for her son. After putting the resident in contact with officers, they had received all the right information. Councillor Hunt asked if there was a way residents could contact officers directly.

Helen Huntley referenced a green paper which had come out last year, which stated that all early years setting should have a SENCO. This would make a big difference, particularly when determining if gaps in education were due to the pandemic or due to a special need. Parents were able to apply for an EHCP for their child, a session would be run with the Parent Carer Forum on how to apply for this.

Clive Haines added that an excellent early years pathway was in place, a number of children were attending school who had not been identified for a EHCP when they should have one in place. Work was being done in this area.

Councillor Hunt said that the child in question was autistic and the parent had problems contacting the council, which was why they had contacted their local councillor. Councillor Hunt asked where was best to go for residents to receive direct support.

Clive Haines said that parents could request an EHCP, the process was outlined on the council website.

Helen Huntley asked if the parent was aware of the RBWM local offer, this was a statutory part of the website.

Kelly Nash said that there was an independent advice and support service, which could help parents. Information was available as part of the local offer.

EMOTIONAL RELATED SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Kelly Nash said that emotional related school avoidance (ERSA) was young people who experienced difficulties attending school due to a wide range of factors which had led to an emotional response to school attendance. Some children could attend school but showed signs of anxiety or stress, while other children could be absent from school for a significant period of time. Children with ERSA often did want to attend school, but were unable to do so due to things like anxiety. A toolkit pilot had been launched in September 2021, which provided guidance and further information for schools on ERSA. Schools could do an audit and consider a checklist along with a support plan for individual children. Many schools had found the toolkit to be useful, however, there were a number of schools that had not used the toolkit or were not aware that the toolkit was available. A ERSA link assistant psychologist had been appointed, which would encourage schools to identify an ERSA lead member of staff which could help promote training and information. A 'pupils educationally at risk' panel provided strategic leadership to ensure that children not attending school were provided with effective support in an appropriate setting.

The Chairman asked what the trend of ERSA was in RBWM schools at the moment.

Kelly Nash said that 22% of children were regarded as 'persistently absence' nationally, in RBWM this was 10%. The number of home educated pupils had doubled from around 100 to around 200 children. The Education Welfare service had collected data and 37% of referrals into the team were for children who were affected by ERSA. A lot of these children enjoyed being at home during the course of the pandemic and the transition back to the traditional school environment had been particularly difficult.

The Chairman asked how this integrated with colleagues and teams in the NHS.

Kelly Nash explained that the project was being worked on closely with the CCG, there was multi-agency representation on the working group.

Councillor Del Campo considered that particularly in the current cost of living crisis, there would be concern from parents about children being absent from school and potential fines which could be made.

Kelly Nash said that the Education Welfare service supported parents and carers and looked to build a trusting relationship which ensured a collaborative approach.

Councillor Del Campo felt that the message needed to be reinforced with the toolkits and repeated so that more schools were aware of the toolkit and how it could be used.

Clive Haines added that fining was a last resort for the council, they wanted children to attend school. Work was done closely with parents and young people, each case was different.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would take place on Monday 6th February 2023 at 5pm.

The meeting, which began at 5.00 pm, finished at 6.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....