

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 18 April 2024

Present: Councillors Helen Taylor (Chair), Devon Davies (Vice-Chair), Gurch Singh, Suzanne Cross, Carole Da Costa, Jack Douglas, Genevieve Gosling, George Shaw and John Story

Also in attendance: Poornima Karunacadacharan and Councillor Amy Tisi

Also in attendance virtually: Tony Wilson, Councillor Karen Davies and Councillor Catherine del Campo

Officers: Mark Beeley, Kevin McDaniel, Lin Ferguson, Clive Haines, Katie Worley, Helen Huntley, Sarah Moran, Jonas Thompson-McCormick, Georgia Carless and Charlotte Littlemore

Standards and Quality of Education – A Review of the Academic Year 2022-23

Clive Haines, Deputy Director for Education, introduced the report which set out progress across the borough's schools during the 2022-23 academic year. He highlighted some of the key data and findings which had been presented in the report and the priorities and next steps for the team for the following academic year. Cabinet would be considering the report on 24th April.

Lin Ferguson, Executive Director of Children's Services and Education, added that the majority of children received a good education from good or outstanding schools. She congratulated teachers and headteachers for their work in getting the borough to the current positive position. Exclusions were reducing but there had been an increase in primary school children being excluded. Children with special education needs were also disproportionately represented in exclusions. Lin Ferguson suggested that a task and finish group could consider this in further detail.

Councillor C Da Costa commented on the long waiting lists for assessment for special educational needs and the impact that this would have on exclusions. Additional SEND units were being created and this showed the increasing numbers. She considered whether Covid had made it difficult for children to adapt to school life and if this had then impacted on behaviour.

The Chair noted 'The Anchor' initiative and said that it would be great to see a similar idea featured in Maidenhead. She thanked teachers and parents for their perseverance in the effort to get back to normal post Covid.

Poornima Karunacadacharan asked if there was a correlation in the rise of children being home educated and a decline in exclusions. On the programme for excluded children, she asked if those who had not been permanently excluded were admitted back into mainstream education. Poornima Karunacadacharan asked if there was data on the other protected characteristics.

Lin Ferguson said that she was happy to share the data with the Panel. The information on characteristics was included as part of the report, under the disadvantaged grouping.

ACTION – Data on the number of children which had been permanently excluded to be shared with the Panel.

Councillor Story asked for further information on South Ascot Village School and how subscribed the school was.

Clive Haines confirmed that when the unit opened, the school was at capacity.

Katie Worley, Associate Director for SEND, said that the unit was a building on site and allowed children to also spend time in mainstream education.

Councillor Story asked how many permanent exclusions there had been last year.

He was informed that there had been 25 children excluded with only a couple of primary school exclusions.

Councillor Story noted that there was a special school in Slough which had been used for children who had been permanently excluded.

Clive Haines added that Haybrook College in Slough was the pupil referral base for children excluded by schools in RBWM. There had been a high success rate of getting excluded children back into schools through the fair access panel.

Councillor Story queried the 11 managed moves, with 7 successful in other schools and 4 going back to the school which they had been excluded from. He asked how this worked if the child went back to the same school.

Clive Haines explained that the school needed to keep the child on roll in case the managed move was unsuccessful. There had been successes from children going back to the same school so it was not necessarily negative.

Councillor Shaw thanked all teachers and schools for providing a high quality of education. There had been an increase in primary school EHCP need and he asked if this had been a steady increase over a number of years.

Clive Haines confirmed that it was a continuous trend since the pandemic. RBWM EHCPs were not currently hitting the national figure.

Councillor Shaw said that there were some areas which had been highlighted red in the report for schools which had been rated good by Ofsted. He asked if the schools were being monitored.

Clive Haines said that the team did not rely on just Ofsted inspections to tell them how well a school was performing. It was also important to consider the lived experiences of school children.

Councillor Douglas asked if there was data on the reasons for exclusions.

Clive Haines said that most exclusions were because of physical assault.

Councillor C Da Costa supported the proposal made by Lin Ferguson, that a task and finish group was set up to explore primary school exclusions in more detail.

Councillor G Singh felt that some young children were struggling and that a task and finish group could give some ideas on how to support these children. On the recommendation which congratulated schools for their work, Councillor G Singh suggested adding in the wording 'staff and pupils'.

Councillor D Davies suggested that an extra part of the task and finish group could be to look at if SEND children were more likely to be absent from school or home educated.

Lin Ferguson said that there was a high percentage of home educated SEND children but she was aware of increasing the remit and scope of the group.

Councillor Douglas commented that the report was lengthy but it would be helpful for all of the KPIs to be listed towards the start of the report, along with any key findings which should be highlighted.

Lin Ferguson said it was a helpful suggestion but it was a difficult balance to ensure that all stakeholders got the information they needed from the report. This could be explored.

Councillor Cross commended the team for 23 new teachers being trained. She asked why 20% were now not working inside the borough.

Clive Haines said that these were personal choices as there were plenty of places available.

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, confirmed that the minutes would be published as a supplement to the Cabinet agenda for the meeting due to be held on 24th April.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) Congratulated local schools, staff and pupils on their continued success.**

The meeting, which began at 7.05 pm, finished at 10.00 pm

Chair.....

Date.....