

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 19 December 2017 from 11.00 am - 12.23 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Josh Cook (Vice Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Brian Parbutt
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Chris Tansley
Councillor Sam Webster

Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson (Chair)
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim
Councillor Neghat Khan

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Jane Garrard - Constitutional Services
Judith Harris - Leadership Support Officer
Nick Lee - Head of Inclusion & Learning
Alison Michalska - Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Kate Morris - Governance Officer
Councillor Sam Webster - Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills.

30 MEMBERSHIP CHANGE

RESOLVED to note the appointment of Councillor Andrew Rule as a member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim – Personal
Councillor Sue Johnson (Chair) – Personal
Councillor Neghat Khan – Personal

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Josh Cook (Vice-Chair) chaired the meeting.

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

33 MINUTES

The Committee agreed to delay confirming the minutes of the meeting on 21 November until the next meeting as they were not published along with the agenda.

34 SCRUTINY OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS, EDUCATION AND SKILLS (WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATION PRIORITIES WITHIN THE COUNCIL PLAN)

In a change to the published agenda running order the Committee agreed to hear the item on the Scrutiny of the Portfolio Holder for Business, Education and Skills first and the report on School Exclusions second.

Councillor Sam Webster, Portfolio Holder for Business, Education and Skills introduced the report to the Committee updating them on progress with respect to Education priorities within the Council Plan. He highlighted the following points:

- (a) 86% of pupils attend a school that is rated either good or outstanding by Ofsted. This is up from 69% in 2015. This makes Nottingham better performing than statistical neighbours and other authorities in the East Midlands (both at 84%);
- (b) As some pupils who live in Nottingham City attend schools just over the boundary in County, Nottingham City also monitors their performance and liaises with County Council over any concerns. Improvement Plans are shared with the City Council;
- (c) The Council are working with academy schools and Trusts which fall outside the Council's remit, as well as maintained schools to bring about improvement;
- (d) The newly formed charitable Nottingham School's Trust works with all but 2 maintained schools to help share resources and encourage collaboration;
- (e) Schools across the City and those schools just over the boundary are regularly reviewed and RAG rated to ensure good or outstanding education. There are a number of large academies that are now due for Ofsted inspection within the City and there will be peaks and troughs in performance;
- (f) 94% of pupils received their first or second choice schools in Primary education. There have been an additional 4000 places created and there are further expansion programmes taking place to create more class spaces in high demand areas;
- (g) The Primary School absence rate has reduced and is closer to the national average and has remained stable for some time. The Secondary School absence rate has also reduced and the gap between that and the national average has narrowed;
- (h) The Council continues to push the "Every Day Matters" message to parents to emphasise the importance of attendance, and truancy patrols are undertaken in different areas around the city;
- (i) Following a court case involving the Isle of Wight around what "regular attendance" means, there are tighter guidelines for parents and schools

around unauthorised absence. This is likely to result in better figures in the future;

- (j) GCSE results are still a challenge with just over 30% achieving a strong pass. The grading system and bench mark for a strong pass has changed a number of times over the last few years and consistent measuring has been difficult.
- (k) The gap between Nottingham City's achievement of strong pass at GCSE and the national average is narrowing but progress could be quicker and more effective;
- (l) All but one secondary school in Nottingham is an academy and so the opportunity to intervene and improve schools is limited;
- (m) Over the last ten years exclusion rates have risen significantly. There are concerns raised from various sectors that schools are doing this as a method of pushing up their results;
- (n) From April 2018 the Fair Access system will be returning "in-house" to Nottingham City Council. A letter has been sent to head teachers reminding them that permanent exclusion should be used as a last resort when all other interventions have been exhausted. The Regional Commissioner for Schools has also been altered to the high levels of permanent exclusion within Nottingham;
- (o) A work group has been set up to look at early identification and intervention for children at risk of exclusion;
- (p) A pilot scheme has been established to focus on inclusion within schools. 5 schools have signed up and have received devolved funding providing that there are no permanent exclusions. This has led to no permanent exclusions within these schools and has shown that schools are able to support these pupils to improve outcomes;

Following questions and comments from the Committee the following points were made:

- (q) Statistical neighbours are those cities who are statistically comparable to Nottingham City. They include, Southampton, Hull, Bristol, Salford and Sandwell. These are comparable to Nottingham City in terms of population, deprivation etc;
- (r) The Check and Challenge hotline is mainly targeted for other service providers to report concerns about school non-attendance, however if citizens are concerned about neighbourhood children not attending school then they can also use the hotline too;
- (s) The target for first and second choice schools is 100% however 94% is very good and better than many other local authorities across the country.

- (t) It is unlikely that the 100% target will be achieved easily as families continue to apply for unrealistic school places, the achievement of this target is also affected by families only applying for one school place where as the strong guidance advises applying for up to four places;
- (u) A further area for improvement is in-year allocation of school places when a child is moving from one school to another, either coming into the authority or within the authority;
- (v) The National Curriculum has become much more exam focused and this “one size fits all” approach is not suitable for all young people. This is impacting on results as this single style of education does not suit all everyone;
- (w) There is additional work going into the transition between primary level and secondary level education with additional support for children making the transition. The level of progress made at primary age is not currently being sustained through to secondary education;
- (x) Ofsted are now referencing levels of exclusion in their reports and the Regional Commissioner for Schools is taking a robust approach to reduce permanent exclusion rates. There is media interest in the national issue of using exclusion as a way of improving grades, all of which is working towards changing the approach schools may choose to take;
- (y) As all but one secondary school within the City is an academy it is not possible to put in place a single whole city system to tackle the issue. Some schools who struggle with high exclusion rates are unlikely sign up to the encouraging pilot scheme;

RESOLVED to thank Councillor Sam Webster for his attendance at the meeting and to note the content of his report.

35 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

Nick Lee, Head of Access & Learning introduced his report on School exclusions to the Committee. He advised the Committee members that this report would give a more detailed view of the issue that was briefly touch on in minute 34. He highlighted the following points:

- (a) Primary school figures have been reasonably stable but are starting to creep up. Primary head teachers report dealing with more challenging behaviour at an earlier age. Secondary school figures are very high and have been for a period of time;
- (b) The use of fixed term exclusion (exclusion of up to 5 days) has increased across primary and secondary schools;
- (c) In secondary schools the main reported reason for exclusion is persistent, disruptive behaviour. This includes distraction in class, persistent incursion of rules, issues around behaviour that is challenging and seen as a continued

rejection of the authority of the school all of which makes effective teaching and learning difficult. Other common reasons for exclusion include verbal abuse of an adult, assault on a pupil, assault of an adult, drugs, damage to school property and bullying and/or racist behaviour;

- (d) In primary schools the main reported reason for exclusion is physical assault on an adult followed by disruptive behaviour, violence between pupils and damage to school property;
- (e) When a child is permanently excluded they go onto roll with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). This unit has a physical capacity for 60 pupils, at the end of this last academic year there were more than 300 pupils on roll;
- (f) This large number of pupils on roll at the PRU means that many are being placed in alternative provision, and greatly reduces the ability of the PRU to work meaningfully with pupils;
- (g) The cost of sending a pupil to alternative provision can be as much as £25,000. This is not sustainable on going as a city;
- (h) An item will be taken to the School's Forum to encourage wider sign up to the pilot, as discussed in minute 34 (p) which uses a tiered structure of intervention including in-house provision and external services;
- (i) The aim is to tackle the issue with early intervention and prevention work. Work is being done at a primary and even at a preschool level to tackle challenging behaviour and to build capacity for continued work on the issue. Secondary head teachers are also introducing this approach;
- (j) The transition between primary and secondary schools is important and schools have reported that essential information on particular needs of young people has not been notified to the secondary school. There is a disconnect where older siblings of incoming students are not identified and continuing family needs are not recognised because of this;

Following questions and comments from the Committee the following further information was given:

- (k) The schools involved in the pilot are representative of schools across the city. Bluecoat Beechdale had high exclusion rates in the past, there is a diverse intake of pupils from the inner city areas as well as from estates. It is typical of the wider community as is Nottingham Academy;
- (l) Good practice is not having very high exclusion rates. It is recognised that sometimes exclusion is the right thing to do, however only at the point that all other interventions and other options have exhausted;
- (m) Better educational attainment leads to better outcomes for young people and fewer referrals to other agencies;

- (n) Not all use of alternative provision is unsuitable for pupils. Some pupils thrive in alternative provision with its broader curriculum. However alternative provision should be targeted to those pupil who most benefit from it;
- (o) A more realistic view of attainment and exclusion would be for schools to measure on a whole cohort, not just those sitting exams at the end of the school year;

RESOLVED to thank Nick Lee for his attendance and to note the content of his report.

36 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Jane Garrard, Senior Governance Officer introduced the work programme for 2017-18. She highlighted a small change to the January meeting and noted that the date of the March meeting should read 20 March 2018.

RESOLVED to note the content of the work programme for 2017-18