

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 18 July 2017 from 11.05 am - 1.26 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Sue Johnson (Chair)
Councillor Josh Cook (Vice Chair)
Councillor Georgina Culley (minutes 13 - 15 inclusive)
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Brian Parbutt
Maria Ward – Nottingham CVS (minutes 13 onwards)

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Chris Tansley
Councillor Neghat Khan

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Chris Cook | - Children's Safeguarding Board Independent Chair |
| Alistair Conquer | - Head of Educational Curriculum & Enrichment |
| Pat Fielding | - Director of Education |
| Jane Garrard | - Senior Governance Officer |
| Sian Hampton | - Executive Principle Bluecoat Beechdale Academies Trust |
| Judith Harris | - Leadership Support Officer |
| Alison Michalska | - Corporate Director for Children and Adults |
| Kate Morris | - Governance Officer |
| Councillor Sam Webster | - Portfolio Holder for Business, Education and Skills |

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Neghat Khan - Other Council Business
Councillor Chris Tansley - Personal

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 POST OFSTED IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Carl Elder, Head Teacher at Bluecoat Beechdale Academy gave a presentation to the Committee on the Post OFSTED Improvement Journey for Bluecoat Beechdale Academy. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) In 2014 the school was judged to be one of the worst in the country in terms of weak intakes and poor outcomes. Following the start involvement of Bluecoat Academy Trust results and outcomes have been improving and now the school is out performing 100's of others nationally;
- (b) 69% of students live within an area ranked in the top 10% most deprived in Britain, and 20% live in an area ranked in the top 1% most deprived in Britain;
- (c) this disadvantage is not just financial for the students of the current year 11 students, 30% had primary school experiences that were rated good or better. Of the current year 10 students, 16% had primary school experiences rated good or better and of the current year 9 students 14% had primary school experiences that were rated good or better;
- (d) historically the school has not had a good reputation and this has resulted in instability of the student population with students moving in and out of the school frequently. In the current year 11 just over half of the students started at the school in year 7. There is increased stability starting to show for current year 9 and the recruitment and retention of students has improved over recent years, the upcoming intake of year 7 students is at least 178;
- (e) there has been, and continues to be a focus on student attendance. In 2011/12 it was below 90%. Students are beginning to see the value of their education more, and work by an ex-police officer has pushed attendance up to over 94% in 2015/16;
- (f) there has also been an improvement in achievements. More students are gaining 5 or more A* – C (including English and Maths), and the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A* – G is now above the national average. Using the new Attainment 8 measures students are doing one whole grade better than the previous year;
- (g) support work for pupils who attract the pupil premium is paying off with this group improving more quickly than non-pupil premium students. For some years pupils within the SEND cohort did not achieve the 5 or more A* - C grade, but now a quarter do;
- (h) there are still challenges around literacy levels with around 42% of current year 11 students being at or above expected reading competency. 2 dedicated Literacy Leads have been appointed as part of Trust wide improvement plans and the Trust is engaging with the Reading Recovery Projects in order to push literacy levels up;
- (i) in February 2017 Ofsted rated the school as good, behaviour was the one area where improvement was suggested and this is another focus for the Trust. This improved rating has helped to recruit and retain staff and students;

Following questions from the Committee the following points were made:

- (j) Exclusion rates are low and the Academy and Trust have spent time investing in alternative strategies. There are staff specifically appointed to address challenging behaviour and deal with challenging students. The Trust is clear about behaviour expectations and support students when they find these difficult to achieve. Keyworkers, mentors and extended timescales are all used to help students achieve the expected behaviour standards;
- (k) The next couple of years will be challenging with the upcoming cohorts of students having had challenging primary education experiences. However the Trust has systems in place and skilled staff in post to offer the best support to students;
- (l) In the past there have been as many as 47 primary schools feeding into Bluecoat Beechdale Academy. This has now stabilised in the 30's and work to improve transition from primary to secondary is progressing. Ideally, transition work would begin with year 5 students but as they do not know which school they will attend at that time it is not possible to do sustained work on this theme, however informal interactions can begin;
- (m) It would benefit students if more parity was given to vocational qualifications. The current curriculum is quite narrow and does not suit a large proportion of young people. The Trust tries to offer students vocational courses and equip students with directly transferable skills for the workplace however they are expensive to run. The Trust is aiming to equip the students with the skills to learn and the experience and belief that they can achieve;
- (n) The most difficult challenge to address on the journey was the level of aspiration of the students and it is still a challenge in many students. Resources are also ongoing challenge as is seen in schools and Trusts across the country;
- (o) Safeguarding practices are seen as excellent, there are robust systems in place and staff are experienced in safeguarding issues;

Phil Crompton, Chief Executive Officer of Trent Academies Group gave a presentation on the Post Ofsted Improvement Journey for Farnborough Academy. He highlighted the following points:

- (p) In 2007 Farnborough School was judged as outstanding by Ofsted. However after the Fairham School closed in 2009 distorting the catchment area, the longstanding and stable Head Teacher retiring in 2010 and austerity measures being introduced, the Ofsted inspection in 2011 found the school to have declined to a good rating. Staff at the time felt this was a generous rating. In 2013 the school moved to a new Private Finance Initiative (PFI) building, and in the same year the school was put into special measures after an Ofsted Inspection found it to be inadequate. In 2014 partnership with Rushcliffe (Trent Academies Group) was established and the school academised in early 2015. Student numbers had been in decline for some time and with the Tram line opening it created an easy route for students to Emmanuel School which caused further reduction in numbers of students;

- (q) Following academisation Ofsted rated the school as requiring improvement, but noted the improvement that had already taken place. The next inspection is likely to take place in October 2017;
- (r) Exam results are improving, with 40% of students gaining 5 or more A* - C grade GCSE's compared with 16% in 2015. Attendance has also improved from 88% in 2014 to 94% in 2017
- (s) new systems are in place to properly monitor achievement and progress, behaviour management systems are also in place and there has been heavy investment in the pastoral services;
- (t) Work is also taking place to build up self-esteem of students and the community at large with achievement evenings and events being run for both secondary age pupils and for primary pupils;
- (u) There are still a number of challenges faced by the school. The parking levy is problematic with staff moving between schools over the borders of the city, and the PFI arrangement can be restrictive;
- (v) Further work needs to be done on various issues such building aspirations of pupils and the community, a city wide sporting event has been suggested and support for the national EBAC to raise the profile of Design and the Arts;

Following discussion and questions from the Committee the following information was highlighted:

- (w) One of the major changes is that the students are now proud of their school and teachers are proud to work there. There is an ethos of high standards and high expectations which pushes up outcomes;
- (x) The population in Clifton is aging and as a result there are less pupils coming to Farnborough Academy. Of the population who are of school age there is a significant amount who look outside Clifton for their education, there still exists within the community the ideal that there are better things on offer outside of Clifton and many young people move away from the estate;
- (y) Levels of permanent exclusions are higher than would be preferred, challenging behaviour has not been well managed for some years and the following heavy investment in pastoral services the Trust is confident that robust strategies are now in place to tackle the behaviour that remains problematic;
- (z) To improve employability for students the future focus would be on work related skills rather than the narrow league table drive curriculum currently in place. A number of Trusts within the Nottingham area have expressed an interest in introducing more vocational style qualifications and forming links to a working environment at an early stage;

- (aa) Safeguarding systems are strong as are links to external agencies that offer support to students and their families. Focus is on early help and early intervention for families who are struggling. Removing barriers to learning is seen as key;

RESOLVED to:

- (1) thank Bluecoat Beechdale Academy and Farnborough Academy for their attendance and for engaging with the Committee;**
- (2) note the content of the presentations;**

14 REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

John Edwards, Regional Schools Commissioner for East Midlands and Humber thanked the Committee for the invitation to attend the meeting and to discuss his role. He outlined the following points:

- (a) The formal roles of the Regional Schools Commissioner are delegated from the Secretary of State and include:
- Where academies and schools are underperforming working with the trusts to ensure appropriate action is taken to improve performance
 - Tackling underperformance in maintained school
 - Conversion of maintained schools to academies
 - Approval of sponsors and multi academy trusts
 - Deciding on making significant changes to academies and free schools
 - Advising on proposals for new free schools, and whether to cancel, defer or enter into funding agreements with free school projects.
- (b) Each Commissioner is supported by a head teachers board made up of academy head teachers and sector leaders who provide advice and challenge on decision the Commission makes;
- (c) The main objective for the Commissioner is to ensure that schools are good quality and deliver great outcomes for students;
- (d) There are a range of ways a Commissioner can work towards these outcomes:
- Direct work with academy trusts, education advisors and specialists to provide assessment of a school at its present stage and predictions of where it is heading
 - Warnings issued to academy trusts to improve performance and, ultimately, termination of a trusts responsibility for a school if performance does not improve
 - Transfer of responsibility for a school from one trust to another either voluntarily or enforced
 - Advise Trusts around time to expand or time to wait, improving capacity for support and performance improvement
- (e) When a maintained school converts to an academy the board of head teachers will advise on the decision making process. Considerations will be:

- Current and projected performance of the school
- Current performance of the trust it will be joining or proposals for the trust it will form
- Whether the school has capacity to improve or will require significant support to do so
- Whether a strong leadership team in place or will be appointed?
- Financial implications for the School/Trust/Sponsor

Following questions from the board and discussion the following points were made:

- (f) Permanent exclusion figures have risen sharply since the start of academisation, both in Nottingham City and nationally. Policy rests with head teachers and trusts working in partnership, however pupil needs are also recognised;
- (g) When schools have a history of challenging behaviour, reflected in Ofsted reports there is often a spike in permanent exclusions numbers at the start of academisation which is a recognised early stage of addressing challenging behaviour in order to affect change. Work continues around permanent exclusions to understand trends and patterns;
- (h) Nottingham City's GCSE results remain less favourable than expected as a Core City and it is recognised that the City's performance is not where it should be. The key to tackling this is strong action taken against underperforming trusts, work to continue to build capacity for improvement, strong stable trusts, and focused partnership work and collaboration;
- (i) Work is taking place to understand how to prevent sustained underperformance and the pathway to recovery. Some schools are bucking the trend and in the majority of those cases they are schools with the support of strong multi-academy trusts. It is important to spot decline when it is happening, and it is the Trust's responsibility to do that and to take action to turn the school around.
- (j) it remains confusing for parents who holds responsibility for the schools and how they can address issues should they arise. In the first instance parents should address issues directly with the school. Responsibility for improving educational attainment of children is the focus of Corporate Director of Children and Adults and any strategic concerns can be raised with the Officer of the Regional Schools Commissioner;

RESOLVED to thank John Edwards for his attendance at the meeting

15 EDUCATION TRUST UPDATE

Nick Lee, Head of access and Learning introduced the Education Trust Update to the Committee. He highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Education trust was initially developed in response to a government white paper on full academisation of all maintained schools. Those schools who

were not keen on conversion came together to explore how they could work together and to re-establish a feeling of cohesion;

- (b) The Government white paper on full academisation has now been shelved but the schools who have been involved see the benefits of working in partnership and are keen to progress;
- (c) The proposal is that the trust will be opened on 1st September 2017 and will be structured as a not for profit Charitable Trust. Members will be appointed from the Council and from the schools and the Chief Executive is the Director of Education;
- (d) 30 schools have committed to joining the trust, including 2 standalone academies;
- (e) The schools will continue to be maintained by the Council, but will benefit from the support and added value being within the Trust will bring. This will also prevent the schools from being susceptible to academisation and boost performance;
- (f) As a charity the Trust will be able to apply for funding streams not available to the Council and will be bidding through the Department for Education;
- (g) The Trusts priorities are driving strong progress in Primary results and improving the outcomes for pupils;
- (h) The trust will allow the schools involved to access joint procurement reducing costs and achieving added value. These savings can then be reinvested into the schools to deliver better service;

Following questions from the Committee the following information was highlighted:

- (i) Not all maintained primary schools have chosen to join the Trust. The Council will continue to meet its statutory duty around school improvements programme for those schools, however the schools will not benefit from the added value the trust will offer;

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

16 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Jane Garrard Senior Governance Officer introduced a report on the Work Programme 2017/18.

RESOLVED to note the work programme for the municipal year 2017/18