

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 March 2015 (7:30pm – 9:50pm)**

Present: Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Jason Frost (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Joshua Chapman and John Wood.

Co-opted Members: Jack How, Emma Adams

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary.

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Philippa Crowder and Carol Smith. Councillors Nic Dodin and Keith Roberts were not present.

Apologies were also received from co-opted Members - Philip Grundy Lynda Rice and Julie Lamb.

The Chairman gave details of the action to be taken in case of fire or other event that may require an evacuation of the meeting room.

41 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 15 January 2015 and of the joint meeting with Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 18 February 2015 were agreed subject to the correction that Alan Steward was present at the meeting of 18 February 2015 as a representative of the Havering Clinical Commissioning Group.

The minutes of both meetings were otherwise agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE EXCLUSION DATA

The sub-committee considered a detailed report on Attendance and Exclusion that was presented by the Alternative Provision & Looked After Children (LAC) Education Manager.

It was stated that absence from school, whether due to poor attendance or school exclusion, had a detrimental effect on the achievement of children and young people.

One of the reasons for the Government's focus on attendance was that there was clear evidence linking attendance to academic success and positive progression post compulsory schooling. Members noted that of pupils who missed more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent managed to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including Maths and English. Seventy-three per cent of pupils who had over 95 per cent attendance achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C.

The issue of taking children out of school for holidays in term time was one which had been much debated. The present Government's stance was that parents should not, except in the most exceptional circumstances, take their child out of school during term time. Local authorities and schools were therefore under an obligation to discourage parents/carers from taking such action. The Government had tightened its stance in this area through recent updated legislation.

The sub-committee noted that vulnerable children were particularly at risk in respect of exclusion rates. This included pupils with SEN, pupils eligible for Free School Meals, looked after children and pupils from certain ethnic groups. The ethnic groups with the highest rates of exclusion were Gypsy/Roma, Travellers of Irish Heritage and Black Afro-Caribbean communities.

Permanent exclusion rates in Havering had been consistently higher than the London and national average over the past few years. This disrupted the learning for young people and in addition, outcomes for excluded pupils did not compare favourably with those of their peers. The Council had a responsibility to minimise school absence and exclusions to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background and ability, had the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school.

The Alternative Provision & LAC Education Manager stated that Havering was seeing a rise in more vulnerable families, including large sibling groups, and families with very complex needs moving into the borough as well as a rise in child protection cases as the demography of the borough changed. In the face of these challenges the Learning and Achievement Service had restructured its support for vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion and introduced new support systems that included the following:

- Instituting an 'In Year Fair Access Panel' (IYFAP) for both primary and secondary aged pupils with the support of Havering schools. A

pre-IYFAP meeting included multi-agency support and considered the holistic needs of pupils to be discussed at the IYFAP meeting.

- Creating a post of Vulnerable Children's Coordinator to facilitate the IYFAP process and liaise with other key LA professionals and external agencies in respect of excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion.
- Attending governor appeal meetings where pupils were permanently excluded
- Reorganising the former Access Panel (AP) and LAC service into an Education Inclusion and Support Service, incorporating Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Services.
- Acknowledgement that schools were in need of extra support and training around the positive handling of students not only in the classroom but also reviewing whole school approaches to behaviour management such as Restorative Approaches.
- The Attendance and Behaviour Service also provided a transition service to support students via the IYFAP panel.

In response to Members' questions, the sub-committee was informed that the service worked with and learnt from other boroughs and alternative providers to make more choices available.

It was clarified that primary exclusion was rare and this could also be attributed to the good working relationship with primary head teachers.

It was also stated that some schools had decided not to buy services from the authority such as the Attendance Officer but to employ staff directly.

Members were informed that there had not been any instances of concern from the Academies in the borough. There had always been a willingness to accept guidance.

The sub-committee was informed that the Alternative Provision & LAC Education Manager also held the position of Virtual Head Teacher - a local authority appointment to promote the educational achievement of all the children looked after by the council.

It was noted that the service worked with secondary schools in the borough to develop an effective managed move system. There were about thirty secondary school managed moves currently in progress.

The sub-committee asked to be presented with data on school referrals.

The sub-committee **noted** the report.

43 **PERFORMANCE OF ALL SCHOOLS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS INCLUDING THOSE IN RECEIPT OF PUPIL PREMIUM**

The sub-committee received a report that summarised the 2014 performance of Havering primary and secondary school pupils in key stage assessments, tests and examinations, and the performance of schools in their most recent Ofsted inspections.

The report stated that the 2013/2014 school year was a positive year for Havering schools. In the primary phase, attainment for the majority of indicators had improved, with some remaining unchanged. Havering had enjoyed its best ever attainment at foundation stage, key stage one and key stage two.

At key stage 4, new DfE (Department for Education) performance table calculations were introduced in 2014 - suppressing the exam equivalents of multiple GCSEs – meaning that the 5 A*-C grades (including English and Maths) pass rate fell, though not as sharply as nationally.

Overall attainment at key stages one, two and four remained above the national average for each of the main attainment measures and was higher than the average performance of the Council's statistical neighbours.

The sub-committee noted the following challenges faced in Havering:

The main challenge in the short and medium term was to improve the borough's ranking, particularly when compared with London by improving the:

- Percentage of schools judged at least 'good' by Ofsted, particularly in the secondary sector;
- Progress pupils made between key stages two and four;
- Attainment of pupils groups such as Children Looked After and low attaining pupils (previously called SEN without a statement) at all key stages;
- Attainment of pupils at key stage four in secondary schools in some subjects, particularly, humanities, science and mathematics;

- The gap In attainment between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged peers;
- Performance of FE colleges providing for 16 to 19 year olds

The Sub-Committee was informed that Havering was the second lowest funded London authority. The issue of obtaining further financial support considering the changing nature of the borough's population was raised along with seeking additional resources and additional teachers.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

44 **MASE (MULTI-AGENCY SEXUAL EXPLOITATION) PARTNERSHIP**

The Head of Children's Services provided a verbal update to the sub-committee on the current progress within the partnership. It was stated that the MASE was looking at Child Sexual Exploitation issues in Havering. It was explained that a meeting with the Police on Child Sexual Exploitation had been held that day and officers would be presenting an update on this area at a future meeting.

It was agreed to invite appropriate council officers and the Police representative to this meeting.

45 **ADMISSIONS PROCESS/SCHOOL PLACES**

The School Admissions Code was the statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeals panels. The purpose of the Code was to ensure that all school places for maintained schools (excluding maintained special schools) and Academies were allocated and offered in an open and fair way. The Code had the force of law and imposed mandatory requirements and included guidelines setting out aims, objectives and other matters in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions.

The local authority, acting as the admission authority for the community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough, was required to determine its admission arrangements to these schools for each school year. The local authority was also required to adopt qualifying schemes for the co-ordination of admissions during the course of the normal admission rounds to Reception, Year 3 and Year 7 at all maintained schools and academies.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

46 **FINAL SELF EVALUATION FORM FOR NOTING**

The Sub-Committee was informed that a very detailed Self Evaluation Form (SEF) report had been completed but it was mentioned that following a recent inspection in Barking and Dagenham, the service understood that a new framework was now in place that required the SEF document to be revised to a smaller version.

This work was about to get under way and Members were offered the choice to receive the edited version of the fully detailed report.

The Sub-Committee **agreed** to receive the full version of the report.

Chairman