

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall
22 September 2011 (7.30 - 8.45 pm)**

Present: Councillors Sandra Bionion (Chair) Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Dennis Bull, Pat Murray, Billy Taylor, Linda Trew, Wendy Brice-Thompson and Lynden Thorpe

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy, Julie Lamb and Anne Ling

Non-voting Member: Bev Whitehead

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nic Dodin, Robby Misir and Frederick Thompson, co-opted member Garry Dennis and Margaret Cameron and Keith Passingham

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2011, as well as the special meeting held on 5 July 2011 and the joint meeting held on 28 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report on Havering's New School Improvement Strategy, presented by the Principal Inspector of the Havering School Improvement Service.

In light of the forthcoming Education Bill, 2011, and the wide-ranging and significant changes to both funding and policy in relation to schools and school improvement, the Department for Education (DfE) directed all Local Authorities to submit detailed plans on their strategy to support all schools, and especially those that were failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils/students, or those schools that were performing below the new government floor standards.

The report summarised Havering's response to the DfE request and set out the strategy that would take Havering's school improvement services forward in the coming months and years.

The Committee noted that the 2011 Education Bill, which took forward the White Paper, The Importance of Teaching (November 2010), charged all Local Authorities with a 'strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence.' The new School Improvement document set out how Havering Local Authority was already ensuring rapid improvements for maintained schools performing below the floor standard, in an Ofsted category and those of some concern - and it set out how all schools would be supported that wish to collaborate to improve educational performance for all pupils. In Havering there was a commitment to high achievement through partnership work with all stakeholders. As an education community Havering was committed to using all resources, both core staff and the great reservoir of skill and expertise present in schools, collectively to enhance pupils' learning and improve the overall quality of provision.

The Committee also considered the specific and general guiding principles underlying the Strategy before looking at the work that Havering Improvement and Advisory Service undertook in schools in the borough. The Committee was informed that as an education community, Havering was using all its resources collectively to enhance pupils' learning and improve the overall quality of provision. There was a collective commitment to open, transparent communication and honest and frank debate. The LA regularly reviewed its practice in relation to its key activities with representative groups of schools and governors, particularly in relation to the nature of the monitoring, challenge, intervention and any core elements of the support provided.

There was, with the full agreement of schools, a commitment to:

- partnership working;
- support their ongoing development of effective school self- evaluation and school improvement planning;
- offer appropriate challenge and intervention, this being based on rigorous analysis of all available data;
- monitor and evaluate effectively to identify potential weaknesses at an early stage so as to enable early intervention;
- apply the criteria used to determine the need for intervention;

The purpose was to develop ways of working, in partnership, that would build on existing effective practice.

Crucially, there were three strands of work which Havering's School Improvement Service undertook, broken down as follows:

- Core Responsibility: Council Core Funding and School Funding Forum support for SCC
- Traded Service: Packages of brokered support, if appropriate
- Support for Schools by Schools: HT/LA Steering Group setting protocols, recruitment, training and quality assurance

Core Responsibility: Preventing School Failure

The LA had identified three categories of school support. In all cases there was a discussion between the LA and the school prior to the placing of the school in a category, unless it was an automatic category change such as a school going into an Ofsted category or performing below floor standards.

The key criteria for categorisation were:

- Standards and progress achieved since the last Ofsted;
- Capacity for improvement

These were considered and reviewed annually. In addition, the Schools' Monitoring Group (SMG) met once every half-term to consider issues arising from across Social Care and Learning, which may cause additional criteria to be considered as part of the categorisation process.

Both schools and the LA reviewed performance in line with key areas covered by the Ofsted Framework. Regular review and completion of a school based self-evaluation process by the school was strongly encouraged as the foundation of that process.

The key areas currently include:

- current performance in terms of achievement and attainment;
- trends over time;
- teaching and learning;
- leadership and management;
- quality of provision;
- personal development and well being; effective safeguarding procedures;
- Effectiveness of community cohesion, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination; capacity for improvement; stability; and attitudes.

The Committee was informed of the various categories of support that schools received and the nature of that support as appropriate.

Category 1: Schools on track for good or outstanding at their next Ofsted

Schools in which there are no concerns, where there are some outstanding or good elements, where pupils make good or better progress in terms of value added and where their attainment was normally above or at national average.

Category 2: Schools satisfactory at last Ofsted and improving

Schools in this category might have one of the following:

- schools removed from category 3 which remain Category 2 for a minimum of one year;
- schools that have identified that they need to broker in some additional support to build capacity;
- schools amalgamating or federating;
- no substantive Headteacher, but still with the capability to improve;
- new Headteacher (for first year only); and
- Schools facing difficulties at a particular point in time (e.g. high number of temporary staff, budget).

Category 3A: Schools satisfactory at last Ofsted, potentially vulnerable to remaining satisfactory or an Ofsted category

Schools in this category were at risk of being identified as requiring a notice to improve at their next Ofsted Inspection.

This would normally include significant identified weaknesses in one or more of the following:

- standards/achievement
- leadership and management
- teaching and learning
- behaviour
- personal development and well being
- home-school relationships
- budgetary control

Schools removed from category 3B remain in category 3A for a minimum of one year. Schools within this category could also be identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' in which Statutory Intervention may be needed.

Category 3B: Schools in Ofsted category or performing below the floor standard

- schools served an Improvement Notice by Ofsted;

- schools identified by Ofsted as requiring Special Measures;
- Schools performing below the floor standards;

Schools within this category would be identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' in which Statutory Intervention may be needed.

Category 3C: LA Formal Warning Schools

Schools in this category were identified by the LA and would be subject to a formal warning where it had evidence that:

- the standards of performance of pupils at the school were unacceptably low and were likely to remain so, unless the LA exercises its Statutory Power; and/or
- there had been a serious breakdown in the way that the school was managed or governed which was prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, pupils' standards or performance (e.g. serious financial difficulties); and/or
- the safety of pupils or staff at the school was threatened (whether by breakdown of discipline or otherwise).

Schools within this category would be identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' where a formal warning and Statutory Interventions were in place.

The Committee noted that the following support to schools depending on their category, as follows:

Schools in Category 1: There was an offer of 0.5 day of core entitlement – a 'keep in touch' meeting.

Schools in Category 2: There was an offer of 1.5 days of core whole school improvement entitlement.

Schools in Category 3A: There was an offer of 3 days of core whole school improvement entitlement and a small number of days of subject and aspect support.

Schools in Category 3B: There was an offer of 6 days of core whole school improvement entitlement and a larger number of subject and aspect days of support. Schools in this category were likely to have a variety of Statutory Interventions in place e.g. formal whole School Improvement Partnerships.

The Committee then asked various questions arising from the report; amongst these members asked how many secondary schools in the borough had or were planning to become academies. Officers responded by informing the Committee that so far 11 out of Havering's 18 secondary schools had become academies, with 1 more having announced its

intention to take on academy status. This left 6 schools under the direct control of the LA.

Members queried the role of the LA if academies were not meeting required performance standards and specifically the role of the LA in such cases. It was explained that this remained to be confirmed, as the LA did have to hold academies to account yet possessed no powers of intervention, as academies were accountable to the Department for Education and the Secretary of State.

The discussion turned to focus upon special schools and how, in the absence of the A-C GCSE (including English and Maths) measure used in mainstream schools, performance standards could be assessed. It was explained that in Havering the standard assessment criteria used was routes of progress as no threshold had yet been set by the Department for Education. There was a national benchmarking system known as CASPER.

The Committee noted the report.

3 FUTURE AGENDAS

The Committee discussed the items it would consider at future meetings and agreed the following:

- Update on the take up of college places in Havering
- Careers service being offered in schools in light of the discontinuation of the Connexions Service.
- Provision of Summer Schools
- Budget Variance
- (after Christmas) Update on the success of the post-16 pilot scheme for SEN pupils.

Chairman