

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 11.00 am on Thursday, 1 February 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor CE Thomas (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor E M Reeves

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and David Jackson

Other Present
(by invitation): A Gallagher – Headteacher, Foxford Community School, Vice
Chair of Secondary Partnership

Employees (by
Directorate):

Education and Skills K Nelson (Chief Partnerships Officer), R Sugars (Director), M
Ledgard

Law and Governance G Holmes, E Jones, T Robinson

Apologies: Councillors T Khan, A Masih and A Tucker
Councillor Dr K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and
Skills)
Mr G Vohra

Public Business

28. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

29. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2023 were signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

30. Coventry Education Performance 2023

The Board considered a briefing note of the Director for Education and Skills which provided an update on Coventry's 2023 performance in the following areas:

- Ofsted profile

- Trends in pupil numbers
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Phonics and Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4 (provisional)
- Age 16-19 attainment
- Post-16 participation in education, employment and training
- Attendance and exclusions
- Difference in performance between males and females
- Performance of vulnerable groups

The briefing note detailed the vision of the Coventry Education Partnership which has high expectations for children and young people to achieve their full potential whatever their culture or background. Statutorily it is the responsibility of school leaders to secure improvement in their school, but as part of our working partnership with all schools and settings, the LA acts as champions of educational excellence, forging strong professional relationships and networks.

Specifically, the Coventry Education Partnership prioritises enhancing the quality of education in Coventry for the 2023/24 academic year while bringing together the local authority, the primary school networks, the secondary collaboratives, and school-to-school support in supporting schools on their improvement journey. Specific priorities for each key stage include early language development, phonics, reading, writing, maths, and post-16 outcomes.

Overall, most schools in Coventry have improved their Ofsted ratings in the last 12 months, but the proportion of children attending a good or better school is still below national average. Many inspections are imminent and positive outcomes are expected, which will improve Coventry's Ofsted profile. However, the challenges faced by some schools due to Covid-related disruptions remain.

In terms of pupil population trends, Coventry has experienced a steady increase in pupil numbers, free school meal eligibility, non-white British children, and SEN support over the last five years. The data in the briefing note supports the changes in these indicators from 2019 to 2023 and compares them with national and statistical neighbours. It also highlights the implications of these trends for the provision and quality of education in Coventry.

Similarly, the data explores the attainment and progress of pupils in Coventry at different key stages, from EYFS to KS5. It highlights the areas of improvement and challenge for each stage and compares Coventry's performance with national and statistical neighbours. It shows that Coventry has improved its performance in most measures, especially in EYFS, KS1, and KS4, but remains below national average in some areas, such as reading at KS2 and A level grades at KS5. It also shows that Coventry has a positive Progress 8 score at KS4, indicating that pupils make more progress than expected nationally.

Additionally, the briefing note identified that Coventry has a high rate of pupils progressing to education, employment or training after completing their 16 to 18 study, and a low rate of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). There has also been a significant increase in the number of A level entries and the level

3 cohort, compared to national averages. This reflects the aspirations and achievements of Coventry's young people.

Overall, Coventry's performance is in line with or above its statistical neighbours for most measures at all key stages of education – these statistical neighbours are directly comparable to Coventry because of similarities in size and other important characteristics. For many (but not all) of the key performance measures Coventry is below national average and this reflects the characteristics of the city in comparison to all Local Authorities nationally. However, national averages remain the target and all Coventry schools continue to strive to meet or exceed national benchmarks. It is important to note that as children and young people progress in education within Coventry their performance continually improves and by the time they reach the end of their school years they secure positive destinations, i.e. high levels of education, employment, or training. This is testament to the whole system, the strong partnership between Coventry education providers and a relentless focus on next steps.

Education officers and a representative of the Coventry Primary Partnership attended the meeting and provided the Board with a detailed presentation that covered the headlines of the briefing note including:

- Using the 2023 data and comparisons made to data collected from 2019 and 2021/2022.
- Headline achievements in 2023
- Attendance and behaviour trends
- Ofsted inspections in 2022-2023
- The Coventry Education Partnership
- The Coventry Education Improvement 2023-24 key priorities

The Board questioned Officers and the representative and received responses on a number of matters relating to the Coventry Education Performance 2023 including:

- Strategies schools and the local authority have to achieve higher levels of attendance – barriers to those not attending and bullying in schools as an aspect of non-attendance.
- Access to transport and children having to travel further to attend school and the impact this has on attendance – travel training programmes for children who live further away.
- The importance of starting in the Early years to improve fluency in reading – strengthening current strategies to ensure children become fluent readers, using our budget effectively, adopting a data approach to recognise any gaps in children's learning with a specific focus on those considered disadvantaged, and utilising our join up approach to incorporate strategies such as Birth to 5 to give children and parents the resources they need.
- Early years learning and literacy in the age of the internet and the impact use of electronic devices is having on reading skills.
- The opportunities and threats posed by the increased use of electronic devices.
- The current availability of written materials in an environment of budget cuts.

- Audio and IT resources helping children and parents whose first language is not English.
- Links between exclusion data and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children – increased numbers of SEND children in mainstream schools, workforce and exclusion strategies including a new tiered model, potential exclusion patterns for specific cohorts, and the difference between managed (6 weeks) and supportive (12 weeks) moves.
- Key stage 2 attainment increasing but progress decreasing and the data patterns to explain this anomaly.
- The pressure created by the increase in children coming into the system and where from.
- The increase in children accessing free school meals and ensuring everyone who qualifies gets one, as well as the number of families who are struggling but don't meet the threshold for financial support.
- Changes to the Ofsted rating scheme and the current consultation underway to discuss the new framework.

The Board gave their thanks to officers and the representative of the Coventry Primary Partnership for attending the meeting and for sharing Coventry's annual education performance and proposed next steps.

RESOLVED that the Board:

1) Identifies the following areas for further scrutiny and adds them to the Work Programme for the April meeting of the Board:

- **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Early Years Provision**
- **One Strategic Plan – School Place Sufficiency**

31. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Board noted the Work Programme with the inclusion of the items identified in Minute 30.

32. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 12.30 pm)