

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 27 November 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor L Kelly (Chair)
Councillor J Birdi
Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor R Thay
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mr Vohra

Other Members: Councillors B Christopher (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

Employees (by Service Area):

Education and Children H Bedford, F Parklen, R Sugars, A Whitrick

Law and Governance G Holmes, T Robinson

Apologies: Councillor P Seaman and Mr D Jackson

Public Business

20. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

21. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 16th of October 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

22. Child Friendly Cov

The Board considered a briefing note and presentation of the Director of Children and Education which provided an update on the progress of Child Friendly Cov – the city's commitment to make Coventry the best city in the UK for children, young people and their families to live and grow up in.

Attached as an appendix to the briefing note was the presentation in which officers summarised the following key points:

- Aspirations of the program and the 5 key objectives.
- Partnership and co-production.
- Child and young person voice and influence – one big voice.
- Safe spaces.
- Safe spaces and young inspectors.
- No more knives tour.
- Child friendly Cov summer fest.

In considering the briefing note and presentation, the Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed matters as summarised below:

- The effectiveness and visual impact of the Safe Spaces stickers and the online resources available to young people.
- Statistics on the footfall and use of the Safe Spaces and attempts to improve and expand the offer to other providers and areas of the city outside of the city centre.
- The provision for out of hours Safe Spaces and the vetting procedures for staff without checks and balances becoming a barrier for available spaces.
- The One Big Voice Survey being shared with private schools and alternative provision.
- Child feedback through the One Big Voice Survey.
- Widening the inclusion of schools across the city for Child Friendly Cov activities.

RESOLVED that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) notes the progress of Child Friendly Cov.

23. **Children in Care Pledge**

The Board considered a briefing note and presentation of the Director of Children and Education outlining progress made against the pledge for children in care and care leavers.

Officers began the presentation (attached as an appendix to the briefing note) by highlighting that the pledge was designed by children. Specifically, it focused around 7 key statements ranging from safety, physical, mental and emotional health, service and education accessibility, happiness, the quality of social workers, and inclusion and identity expression.

In considering the briefing note and presentation, the Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed matters as summarised below:

- The negative impact of changing social workers and the benefit of advocates and independent visitors to making long term connections with children in care and care leavers.
- Children in care being fast tracked for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) where necessary and the service provided by the crisis team.

- Cooperation with the NHS and the ICB as they restructure.

The Board thanked officers for their presentation and recognised the importance of their work for permeating through all of children's services.

RESOLVED that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) notes the current progress made against the pledge for children in care and care leavers.

24. Children Absent from Education

The Board considered a briefing note and presentation of the Director of Children and Education which provided an overview of the statutory requirements and approach taken in Coventry to children who are absent from education.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Councillor K Sandhu, prefaced the officer's presentation by recognising the wide-ranging but vital subject matter and the need to convey the Council's responsibilities and those of parents in an area where the law has changed recently.

The presentation attached as an appendix to the briefing note covered the following key areas:

- Statutory Guidance
- Education Partnership Priorities 2025/26
- Definition of children absent from education
- Responsibilities and staffing
- Strategic Approach
- Attendance
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Permanent Exclusions (PEX) and Suspensions
- Behaviour Pathway
- Education other than at school (EOTAS)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)

In considering the briefing note and presentation, the Board asked questions, received responses and discussed a number of matters as summarised below:

- Increasing non-attendance since the pandemic, despite a slight decrease in non-attendance in the past year, and the safeguarding issues surrounding EHE.
 - Recognising working within the legal requirements of EHE and how increasing non-attendance may be due to an increase in non-attendance policies and data capture efforts.
 - Praise for Coventry's rigorous child protection efforts despite non-attendance challenges.
 - Tools such as visiting and inspecting homes and the EHE register.
- Engaging parents despite difficult non-attendance circumstances especially with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children having to attend doctor's appointments during school hours.

- Adapting the Council's guidance scheme to allow for reasonable adjustments.
- The persistence of non-attendance 5 years on from the pandemic and shifting the focus on younger children to school readiness.
- The pupil referral process for suspensions and exclusions – changing from the extended learning centre to the CAPA (Corrective and Preventive Action) centre to deliver statutory provision but also reduce the trauma of school exclusions.
- The nation-wide trend of exclusions – CAPA utilising a new graduated model to turn the curve on exclusions leading to problems later on in life and recognising bad behaviour as a need not being met.
- School uptake of the attendance support offer and the traded service.
- Relationships with partner organisations such as the Home Office to track non-attendance when children leave the country.
- Supported preventative placements for temporary exclusions which when successful can lead to permanent managed moves.
- Difficulties caused when relationships breakdown between parents and schools and the effect this has on the child's attendance.

RESOLVED that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2):

1) Considers the slides attached at Appendix 1.

2) Creates two Task and Finish Groups to investigate:

- **Elective Home Education (EHE) (Councillors L Kelly, M Mutton, and S Nazir)**
- **School Attendance (Councillors M Mutton, J Gardiner, and Mr G Vohra)**

25. Work Programme

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2025/26 be noted.

26. Any Other Business

There were no items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.50 am)