

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 3.00 pm on Thursday, 9 February 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor J Innes (Chair)
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor A Masih
Councillor R Thay
Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Sybil Hanson and Ghulam Vohra

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)
Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

By invitation: David Jackson (Observer)

Employees Present:

Children's Services J Gregg (Director)
M Legard, A King, R Sugars

Chief Executives K Nelson (Interim Chief Executive (Chief Partnership Officer))

Law and Governance G Holmes, U Patel

Safeguarding R Eaves, D Benson

Secondary Schools V Shelley
Partnership

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Public Business

18. Declarations of Interests

Several members of the Board declared an 'Other Interest' in that they were school governors and as these were not disclosable pecuniary interests, they remained in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record subject to the addition of Sybil Hanson to the list of apologies.

Matter arising: Minute 14(b) (Cost of the School Day Project and Support to and from Schools for Financial Hardship)” – the Board noted that the letter to the Secretary of State had not been sent yet as officers were still waiting for information on the school settlement.

20. **Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report**

The Board considered a briefing note of the Safeguarding Boards Business Manager which introduced the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2021-2022. The full report was appended at Appendix A.

The annual report must be published as per the requirements of the Working Together Act 2018 which states that “In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice”.

The Independent Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership, together with the Safeguarding Boards Business Manager introduced the annual report and provided progress on the three key priorities; (i) neglect, (ii) contextual safeguarding and (iii) making the system work. The report further provided information on what had worked well, area of concerns and what needed to happen for each of the priorities.

The following points were highlighted:

- Despite the ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic, professionals from across the Partnership kept safeguarding at the forefront of daily activity and the ability to meet remotely resulted in a greater number of partners being able to attend meetings and be more involved
- A Neglect toolkit had been developed and shared across the partnership
- Continued improvement in the learning culture tailored events which provided an opportunity to share learning from safeguarding practice reviews
- West Midlands Police have invested heavily in hidden vulnerability training with greater focus around the voice of the child
- 92% of children who went missing received a return to home interview
- Over 90% had completed the mandatory safeguarding training
- Quick response from partners to emerging issues
- Engagement with children from all backgrounds and act on what they say
- Offer multi agency training

The report also provided information on the statutory review undertaken, details of audit activity, the different types of resources available and STAG, the frontline practitioners group.

The Business Plan for 2022-2023 would be based on 3 priority areas as determined by the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive Group.

These being (i) Child Sexual Abuse, (ii) Exploitation and (iii) Making the system work

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters including:

- Category of children who had absconded
- Cross border liaison with neighbouring authorities in relation to missing children
- Whether the data highlighted certain communities were affected more than others
- Consideration to be given to whether places of worship had a role to play
- Issues around involvement of fathers
- Shortage of CAMHS beds on the paediatric ward
- More detail on the type of things that make children feel unsafe, whether on line, etc

The Board commended the officers on an excellent, informative, and well-structured report.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- 1. Note the content of the report**
- 2. Requests that the Partnership consider including the following information in next year's annual report:**
 - (i) The involvement of faith groups**
 - (ii) Progress on equality, diversity and inclusion**
 - (iii) Work on identifying areas where children and young people say they feel safe and unsafe**

21. Coventry Education Performance 2022

The Board considered a report of the Chief Partnership Officer and Director of Education and Skills which provided an update on Coventry Education Performance 2022 on the following:

- Ofsted profile
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Phonics and Key Stage 1 (provisional)
- Key Stage 2 (provisional)
- Key Stage 4 (provisional)
- 16-19 attainment (provisional)
- Post-16 participation in education, employment and training

The report included published data available through government sources. For operational and planning purposes, the Local Authority (LA) also use NCER Nexus and FFT Aspire, which are used by the majority of LAs for data analysis. This

would enable further in depth analysis but was not quoted in the report as regional and national comparisons may not represent the total cohort.

Published data in relation to the performance of vulnerable groups (e.g. disadvantaged, SEN) was not yet available at local and regional level. Headline attainment data (2022) for males and females was provided in Appendix 1 of the report. It was important to note that currently the data is very tenuous as some children missed school completely, whilst others did incredibly well. This made it difficult to draw conclusions, however, if the results are the same next year, this would allow for patterns to be identified and focus on key areas such as language, social interaction etc.

The Board noted and officers reiterated that the LA no longer have any statutory responsibility over schools unless they were deemed inadequate. However, as part of the working partnership with all schools and settings, the LA acted as champions of educational excellence, forging strong professional relationships and networks.

The data indicated that there were some highs such as Key Stage 4 and 5 and lows and that the fall out of the pandemic was still noticeable. The Ofsted outcomes demonstrated that Coventry was in line with, or above average the national trend, however, there was a dip in primary. The improvement in Key Stage 4 and 5 reflected the sheer work undertaken to raise attainment.

The 2022-23 education improvement priorities were detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

The Members asked questions and received responses on a number of matters including:

- Data on the behaviour of pupils, specifically in relation to short term and permanent exclusions
- Capacity issues in year 8
- Attainment of white, working class boys
- Demographic of teachers and head teachers
- Definition of SEND
- Impact of socio-economic issues on families, schools and attainment
- Lack of funding and impact on schools
- Support for children for whom English is a second language

RESOLVED that the Board supports the Cabinet Member in writing once again to the Secretary of State about the financial position schools are in and to invite her to Coventry to discuss this matter further.

22. **Early Years Strategy**

The consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

23. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

The Work Programme was noted.

24. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 4.50 pm)