

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 11.00 am on Thursday, 5 October 2023

Present:

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

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson, Mr D Jackson and Mr G Vohra

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)
Councillor G Hayre (Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing)
Councillor K Miks (Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Board (5))

Employees (by Directorate):

Children's Services K Nelson (Chief Partnerships Officer), N MacDonald, J Monk, R Sugars

Education and Skills J Essex, James Gillum

Law and Governance G Holmes, M Jeffery, C Sinclair

J Brotherton (NHS Coventry and Warwickshire)

Apologies: Councillor T Khan
Councillor A Jobbar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2023 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

9. **Attendance, Behaviour and Exclusion Duties**

The Board considered a briefing note which provided information on the City Council's duties for attendance, behaviour and exclusion.

The DfE published new guidance in 2022, 'Working together to improve school attendance', which set out responsibilities and expectations for all key stakeholders: schools, multi-academy trusts (MATs), Local Authorities (LA), parents/carers. The initial intention was that the guidance would be statutory from September 2023, although that had been delayed.

The DfE guidance, 'Behaviour in Schools' set out clear and comprehensive expectations for schools in relation to managing behaviour. The DfE guidance 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion' was the companion piece to 'Behaviour in Schools' and set out guidance and expectations in relation to pupils who were excluded from school either temporarily or permanently.

The City Council continued to work in partnership with all schools and both attendance and behaviour continue to be key strands of the Education Improvement Citywide priorities.

In respect of attendance, the Local Authority (LA) had worked to enable implementation of the new model from September 2023. LAs locally, regionally, and nationally had made representation to the DfE in relation to the attendance reforms as the view is that they create additional burdens for LAs. It was noted that there had been no additional resource provided to deliver the reforms.

The guidance set out new expectations for LAs to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through the Virtual School
- Have a School Attendance team providing core functions free of charge to all schools (e.g. communication & advice; termly targeting support meetings with every school; support access to multi-disciplinary family support; legal interventions)

In respect of Behaviour and Exclusions, The LA statutory responsibilities largely centred on ensuring pupils are accessing education and the associated safeguarding responsibilities where children and young people miss education. As a champion for all children, the City Council worked with the partnership to ensure we share a collective moral purpose and have the right systems/infrastructure in place to support children and young people in education.

It was noted that in line with the national and regional position, Coventry had seen higher rates of suspension/exclusion following the pandemic. The local figures for the 22/23 academic year were not included in the briefing note as they were still provisional but showed a further increase in rates. Anecdotal feedback is that behaviour challenges have also increased both regionally and nationally in 22/23

academic year. These will be finalised and available, along with regional and national data, later in the Autumn Term, and would be included in the next performance report later in the municipal year.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to attendance, behaviour and exclusion including:

- How schools can provide support in the circumstances of a parent/grandparent/guardian with challenging behaviour.
- The parenting contract
- Wraparound provision
- Impact of the CAHMS waiting list on attendance
- Supported transfers
- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)
- Impact of the pandemic

In addition, Officers undertook to circulate the joint (with Warwickshire) Mental Health programme in Schools and data on the performance of PRUs.

Arising from discussion, Members expressed concern regarding the current lack of school places and it was agreed that this matter be considered as a separate item at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Board note the contents of the report and that an item on the provision of school places be included in the work programme.

10. **Local Area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and AP (Alternative Provision Framework)**

The Board considered a briefing note which set out information on the new Local Area SEND and AP Inspection framework; and provide assurance that the Council and partners are engaged in a collaborative planning and preparation process to ensure inspection readiness.

The current legislative framework for children with special educational needs was set out in The Children and Families Act 2014 – Part 3. The Act set out the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to identify, assess and made provision for children and young people with special educational needs. It also introduced the Education Health and Care Plan as a replacement for the previous Statement of Special Educational Needs and extended the age range of children who fell into its scope from 2-19, to birth up to 25.

It was nationally accepted that the implementation of the new framework was challenging for Local Authorities and partners, in terms of the pace of transition timescale, resources and costs. Ofsted and the CQC (Care Quality Commission) were jointly commissioned by the Government to conduct an inspection of all Local Areas within a five-year period, predominately to assess whether or not the arrangements in place evidenced statutory compliance. The focus was on processes and procedures rather than outcomes. Whilst this one round inspection framework did not result in a 'judgement', each inspection was followed by a detailed letter that was published on the OfSTED and CQC website. If a local area

was deemed to be failing it was required to publish a 'written statement of action' setting out how it would address each of the identified weaknesses.

The presentation set out details on preparing for the SEND and AP Local Area Inspection, and it was noted that Coventry local area was preparing to be constantly inspection-ready throughout the next round of inspections.

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

- Funding for SEND in schools
- Home to school transport
- Elective home education

Arising from discussion, Officers agreed to circulate the Self Evaluation Framework as soon as it was available.

RESOLVED that the Board note the contents of the report and presentation and receive a copy of the Self Evaluation Framework when it was available.

11. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2023/24**

The Board noted the Work Programme and the inclusion of the following items:

- Provision of school places
- Health and wellbeing in schools and universities (Joint with the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5))

12. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 1.15 pm)