

ATTAINMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 March 2015

Present: Councillor M McLaughlin (Chair)

Councillors T Norbury P Hayes
P Brightmore A Brighouse
W Smith H Shoebridge

Apologies: Councillor W Clements

In attendance: H Shoebridge Parent Governor Representative

38 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting of the Attainment Sub Committee and noted apologies.

39 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Sub-Committee were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor P Hayes declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Governor at St Mary's Catholic College.

40 MINUTES

Resolved – That the accuracy of the Minutes of the Attainment Sub Committee held on 10 December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

41 OFSTED ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOLS IN WIRRAL (INCLUDING SCHOOLS IN SPECIAL CATEGORIES)

Sue Talbot, Senior Manager, School Improvement, Targeted Services, Children & Young People's Department gave an overview of Ofsted inspections from 1 September 2014 to 1 March 2015 and responded to Members' questions. It was reported that 0 schools were in an Ofsted category, 7 secondary schools required improvement (3 academies, 4 maintained) and 13 primary schools required improvement. 86% of primary schools were currently reported as good or better; 68% of secondary schools were currently good or better; and 100% of special schools / alternative provision were good or better. There had been 19 inspections in this period; 2

schools had been downgraded (2 primary schools – good to requires improvement), 13 had stayed the same grade (10 good; 3 requires improvement) and 4 schools had been upgraded (2 primary schools, 1 secondary school, 1 special school). Sue Talbot reported that Wirral Hospital School is now rated as an outstanding school. The outcome for Bedford Drive Primary School (requires improvement) was being challenged as it was thought to not be an accurate judgment.

It was reported that, as of September 2015 onwards, schools rated as outstanding would be exempt from further routine inspection providing there are no concerns about performance. It was noted that, as safeguarding was currently monitored alongside educational outcomes, safeguarding would no longer be routinely inspected in those schools previously rated as outstanding. Some schools in Wirral, rated as outstanding, had already not been inspected for eight years. It was noted that the Department of Education could monitor school websites and order a No Notice Inspection, therefore, the school website had to be statutorily satisfactory.

Members discussed a number of issues which included:

- The proposed process for assessment without levels was recognised as a school issue; not a Local Authority issue.
- There was a mixed picture among schools regarding their performance towards narrowing the gap.
- When setting Local Authority targets (for the numbers of schools rated as good or outstanding) the target had to be aspirational. However, the targets would be difficult to achieve due to the changes to GCSEs which were being implemented very quickly.
- It was noted that the level of collaborative working both between schools and with the Local Authority was good, however, the Local Authority would use statutory powers if necessary to intervene. The role of the Local Authority was to steward the whole system.
- A school could undertake a pupil premium review, which would review the school's strategy for spending pupil premium. The review would be undertaken by national leaders in education (such as head teachers).

Resolved – That;

- 1. Sue Talbot be thanked for the presentation;**
- 2. the report be noted.**

42 **OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS REGARDING CLOSING THE GAP**

Dave Hollomby, School Improvement Officer, Children & Young People's Department provided members with a presentation regarding interventions to close the gap.

Using 2012 data, at Key Stage 2, for every two non-free school meal children who attained Level 4b or above in reading and maths and Level 4+ in writing there was one non-free school meal child who did not. The corresponding figure for free school meal children was for every two who did achieve the levels, three did not.

At the end of Key Stage 4, for every two non-free school meal children who attained at 5+ A*-C GCSEs (including English and maths) there was still just one non-free school meal child who did not. The corresponding figure for free school meal children was for every two who did achieve the levels, five did not. Therefore, the failure rate of free school meal pupils had increased.

At A level, for every two non-free school meal children who attained at 3+ A*-A grades there were 28 non-free school meal child who did not. The corresponding figure for free school meal children was for every two who did achieve the levels, 560 did not. It was virtually unheard of for free school meal students to achieve the grades necessary to compete for the most selective universities and professions.

It was reported that there was an attainment gap at every stage in the education system which got wider, not narrower, as children progressed through their schooling. Wirral's gap at age 16 remained a particular concern, standing at the fourth widest in England in 2014. Academic research showed that the following interventions had the biggest impact on narrowing the gap:

- One-to-one and small group tutoring (ideally by teachers)
- Peer-tutoring
- Quality feedback to students by teachers. Durham University had recently published research to demonstrate this.

However, there was also some indication that target-setting for children may also have an impact on attainment levels. All schools and teachers believed they had high expectations of children although it was almost universal to set lower targets for children who did less well at primary school. As disadvantaged children tended to do less well at primary, there was therefore a gap in targets for disadvantaged children. If disadvantaged children had lower targets (on average) than other children then they were less likely to be identified as underachieving against these targets than if they had higher targets. As a result, the disadvantaged children may not be receiving the level of intervention expected.

In Wirral, the RADY project (Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) had been established as a pilot project to check this theory. Three secondary schools joined the pilot and agreed to set targets for Year 7 disadvantaged children that were, on average, equal to those that were set for other children. Initial results from the pilot were promising. However, the pilot is small and further evidence was required. Discussions were being held with Fischer Family Trust (FFT) and other Local Authorities to widen the pilot.

It was suggested that the future work programme for the Sub-Committee could include visits to those schools with the widest gap in attainment as well as schools which had been more successful in narrowing the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and others.

Resolved – That;

- 1. Dave Hollomby be thanked for the presentation;**
- 2. the report be noted;**
- 3. visits to those schools with the widest gap in attainment as well as schools which had been more successful in narrowing the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and others be considered for inclusion on the work programme for the new municipal year.**

43 PROVISION TO SUPPORT BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

Phil Ward, Interim Senior Manager, Special Educational Needs, Children & Young People's Department, Specialist Services, presented a verbal report on the provision to support behavioural issues.

Mr Ward advised Members that upon recent consultations which had now been completed with schools and partners, further discussions now needed to be entered into with Pupil Referral Units in respect of places and how pupils are admitted to school with the Academy and Fair Access Protocol. He informed Members that a strategic group had been established with Local Authority officers and secondary headteachers that would be looking at the detail of the outcome of the consultation. He advised that alternative provision must comply with Ofsted and work was continuing with the PRU Academy as a provider for education for permanently excluded pupils and to become a commissioner for alternative provision for Year 10 and 11 pupils and youngsters who had difficulty in accessing the school curriculum. Mr Ward advised that he would bring a further report to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Mr Ward informed Members that the Local Authority was responsible for partnership working with schools. He referred to the new education, health and care plans and the emphasis being around emotional and mental health wellbeing and how schools could be supported to promote good behaviour. It was reported that key officers and directors were looking at a new 0-25 service and how to support special educational needs and those who present behavioural difficulties in schools.

In response to Members requests, the Chair suggested that the verbal presentation could be followed up by a written briefing note.

Resolved – That;

- 1 Phil Ward be thanked for his presentation;**
- 2 a written briefing note be circulated outlining the details of the verbal presentation.**

44 WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair thanked everyone for their hard work and support during the year and noted the suggestions of the Director of Children's Services in respect of arranging visits to schools with the widest gap in attainment as well as schools which had been more successful in narrowing the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and others to be added to the work programme for the forthcoming municipal year.