

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 13 March 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Beer, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Bridgeman (substitute for Councillor R. Smith), Buchan, Goslin, Mrs Johnson, Michael Leaves (substitute for Councillor Sam Leaves), Tuohy and Winter.

Co-opted Representatives: Mrs Nicky Williams (Parent Governor Representative).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Sam Leaves and Rebecca Smith.

Also in attendance: Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and David Bowles (Head of Education, Participation and Skills) Lisa Mannal (Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West) Ruth Woodhouse (Director of Plymouth Teaching School Alliance) Neelam Bhardwaja (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.20 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

41. **Declarations on Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct:

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mrs Nicky Williams	Minute 44	She is a Parent Governor at High View Primary and sits on the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance.	Personal
Councillor Mrs Bridgeman	Minute 44	She is a Governor at Torbridge Primary School.	Personal
Councillor Mrs Johnson	Minute 44	She is a Governor at Compton Primary School.	Personal
Councillor Winter	Minute 44	He is a Governor at Marine Academy Plymouth.	Personal

42. **Minutes**

Agreed the minutes of the 6 February 2019 Education & Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an accurate record of the meeting.

Under this item a further request for information relating to the Gatsby benchmarking criteria, as raised at the 6 February 2019 meeting, was made.

43. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

44. **Progress Report on School Standards**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and David Bowles (Head of Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Progress Report on School Standards.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) the report set out the analysis of data from 2018 and included information upon attainment, schools considered to be below national averages or coasting and an update on the OFSTED judgement;
- (b) there was positive data linked to phonics however primary school results were mixed; in many areas, Plymouth remained below national averages;
- (c) secondary school data showed little signs of improvement and on the whole figures showed that results remained below the national average – key themes highlighted that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils was still evident, as well as the gap in attainment between boys and girls;
- (d) there were currently 4 secondary schools and 2 primary schools which were identified as being below 'floor standards' (this was a minimum standard set by the government) and were in danger of being classified as coasting; two primary schools and 3 secondary schools were already classified as coasting;
- (e) in terms of the OFSTED judgement, 74.3% of primary schools in Plymouth were assessed as being good or better; this was below the national average of 89% however the gap wasn't as significant as at secondary school level where 47% judged good or better where national average is 80.3%.

Order of Business

With the permission of the Chair the order of business was changed as reflected in the minutes.

44.1 Regional Schools Commissioner

Lisa Mannall (Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West) provided Members with an update on her role and responsibilities and answered questions.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) as Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West, Lisa was able to raise the status of concerns of secondary schooling in Plymouth; she met with the Rt. Hon Nick Gibb MP (Minister of State for School Standards) before Christmas and he agreed to speak at a school improvement conference in the city and was keeping abreast of work undertaken to raise standards;
- (b) Lisa's team was working hard with the South West Teaching Schools Council to support a targeted group of schools, specifically standalone academies and very small multi academy trusts, by using an underspend of the budget to help specific schools in Plymouth to improve their self-evaluation processes and plan strategically for school improvement;
- (c) work was ongoing to develop a professional learning model whereby nationally recognised educational leaders were brought into the city to provide CPD. Most promotions in Plymouth secondary schools were internal therefore Lisa's team were working to get people from outside of the city to work in the schools;
- (d) work was ongoing to provide established MATS into Plymouth to raise standards; national providers were encouraged to get involved in Plymouth but there was no interest due to poor transport links;
- (e) the Regional Schools Commissioner was unable to formally intervene with school standards until the school was judged by OFSTED as being inadequate.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (f) the Plymouth Challenge was not awarded any funding, unlike the London Challenge previously, as money was no longer available therefore improvements needed to be made, and could be made, within the current system with strong leadership;
- (g) the Teaching Schools Alliance was successful in its bid for strategic bid money for phonics and improvements were already evident; the bid set out what money was required and what research was provided to prove that improvements could be made;
- (h) training for governors had not progressed since the school system had changed and information upon data and standards was not considered sufficient to enable governors to undertake their role effectively;
- (i) the Regional Schools Commissioner had no powers in influencing school recruitment;

- (j) Lisa Mannall was a home worker based in Newquay however had a team of 54, with 45 people based in Bristol and others based in London in the Department for Education; her boundary of responsibility was from Land's End to Gloucestershire however she was in Plymouth approximately once a month. Lucy Gordon, Deputy Regional Commissioner for the South West, spent more time in Plymouth;
- (k) she believed that schools needed leaders that were capable of leading and who were able to work in collaboration with other schools to improve;
- (l) as Regional Schools Commissioner, Lisa visited all academies over a 2 year cycle; she advised Members that funding was available for schools that were judged as 'requires improvement' whereby the Teaching School Council would appoint a national leader of education or governance to work in the school to help identify what they need to do to improve;
- (m) Free schools outcomes were the responsibility of the Regional Schools Commissioner once the school was open;
- (n) the roles and responsibilities of Lisa's team included:
 - a delivery team whose role was to work with UTCs, Free Schools and Academies; Lucy Gordon was the Lead for Plymouth;
 - a small team that looked after Lisa and the Deputy Directors;
 - support for the Headteacher Board;
 - support for communications and conferences;
 - a small team focused upon emergency bids for schools;

The Chair thanked Lisa Mannall (Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West) for her attendance at the meeting and for answering Members questions.

44.2 Raising Standards/Attainment Levels

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and David Bowles (Head of Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Raising Standards/Attainment Levels report.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) as well as working with the Regional Schools Commissioner, Plymouth was taking a local council based approach to attracting outstanding leaders to the city whereby it was adapting internal economic development pieces of work to promote a positive image/ positive stories of Plymouth;
- (b) the report contained detailed figures at the request of Members, an addition to the report focused around key stage 4 data (secondary schools) specifically regarding 15-16 year olds. Key measures for 2018, in comparison with 2017

data, showed little sign of improvement, specifically in terms of progress made by young people in Plymouth in comparison to other young people across the country;

- (c) assessing pupil premium data, as the broadest measure to capture young people who were in disadvantaged areas, highlighted that these young people were not performing as well as those children who were in more affluent areas in the city;
- (d) the gender gap in attainment levels between boys and girls was recognised to emerge very early in primary school and continued throughout education to secondary school; girls were seen to make more progress in Plymouth;
- (e) attainment was rising in primary schools however attainment levels were shown to be rising faster across the country.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (f) schools were working hard to address the gender gap between girls and boys; schools had their own programmes to develop skills in reading, writing and maths;
- (g) whilst officers included detailed figures in the report at the request of the Chair, it was recognised that this made the information more challenging to understand; also the removal of percentages removed the ability to compare data from previous years. Officers advised that they were in the process of finalising a 'data book' which contained the Council's performance data in comparison with that of regional statistical neighbours; this data, on the whole, was set out in bar charts and tables and it was considered that this would make it easier to read;
- (h) the Employment and Skills Board was doing a specific piece of work focused upon readiness for work;
- (i) the report also included data of service children who were in receipt of the pupil premium; officers advised that this information was also available as split per school;
- (j) attainment figures of children home schooled across the city were not included in the report as this was outside of the Council's system;
- (k) it was difficult for officers to ascertain if attainment levels had dropped since the creation of academies and free schools as the measures set by the government to judge attainment had changed;
- (l) overall 88% of maintained schools were judged as good or outstanding; all special schools were judged as good and outstanding;
- (m) the panel may wish to add a visit to some of the city's schools to their work programme in 2019/2020 in order to get a feel for what was happening in the

city in terms of education;

- (n) the report took into account the change of GCSE grading markers from A-E to 1-9 for Maths and English only;
- (o) the report contained average scores for the city and whilst Plymouth was lower than national figures and statistical neighbours, there were also schools in the city which were in the top 10% in the country. It was considered that schools were now aware that they needed to understand what outstanding practice consisted of therefore a number of teachers went to Bristol in March 2019 to visit an outstanding school as part of developmental opportunity.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for their report.

It was agreed that –

- 1. the update was noted;
- 2. an item would be included on the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding school visits.

44.3 The Plymouth Oracy Project

Ruth Woodhouse (Director of Plymouth Teaching School Alliance) presented the Plymouth Oracy Project Update.

Key points highlighted to Members included the following:

- (a) a description of Oracy was provided to Members: "Oracy is what schools do to support the development of children's' capacity to use speech to express their thoughts and communicate with others in education and life";
- (b) the Oracy Project was delivered to 50 primary and secondary schools citywide and was created in response to a correlation between poverty and language development and learning;
- (c) the remit and results of the project were the responsibility of the Department of Education (DfE) and the project itself was fully funded by a DfE CIF bid which was approved in 2017;
- (d) the University of St Mark and St John was in the process of assessing the impact of the Oracy Project; from a coordinator perspective, all milestones has been achieved and the project was rated as green;
- (e) as a result of the project, children in early years were seen to have accelerated communication in speaking and improved listening and disadvantaged pupils were making better progress in school; attendance had also improved;
- (f) the Plymouth Oracy Project Dissemination Event was scheduled for Wednesday 3 April 2019; Members were invited to attend.

In response to a question raised it was reported that the full evidence report would set out the projected outcomes and successes of the Oracy Project – this would be shared with Members once available. The project itself had received positive feedback and some Plymouth teachers were due to visit London shortly to see outstanding practice.

Members praised the hard work and success of the Oracy Project and thanked Ruth Woodhouse for her attendance at the meeting.

Members requested to receive the Oracy Project evaluation reports once finalised.

45. **The Plymouth Challenge Update**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and David Bowles (Head of Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Plymouth Challenge Update report.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) the Plymouth Challenge had 3 strands: raising standards, leadership and aspirations. The first two strands were led predominantly by secondary schools, with the third strand, 'aspirations', being led by the local authority;
- (b) the Challenge was launched in February 2017 and had been running for a year with the focus on the first year on developing the governance and programme of work; co-ordination governance still required some improvement however it was considered that the two strands led by secondary schools (raising standards and leadership) needed a closer connection with the Plymouth Education Board;
- (c) a leadership training programme, which all secondary schools were involved in, focused upon leadership skills and leading projects within a school setting;
- (d) the Education Development Trust had a Peer Review Network which was viewed as an add on to OFSTED inspections; it was more of a friendly challenge from peers within the city and outside and was a way of pulling in expertise in Plymouth;
- (e) the raising aspiration strand had a number of components including:
 - Improving careers education, advice and guidance;
 - Developing a wider city conversation on education;
 - Increasing opportunities for employers and partners to work together.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (f) officers were making use of the council's social media channels to promote

positive stories of Plymouth, including educational standards and events – good news stories were sent in and they were posted online;

- (g) the local authority had supplemented the leadership challenge from the dedicated schools grant as it was originally only rolled out to 12 of the 19 secondary schools in the city;
- (h) the council had launched the new approach to intervention and challenge in schools – this had an in-depth action plan that went alongside it and it was hoped that this new approach would help with leadership issues, involving both governors and head teachers. The council had the role as champion for children in the city so was able to communicate with schools before the involvement of the Regional Schools Commissioner;
- (i) there was a potential role for Ward Councillors to communicate good news stories from schools;
- (j) there were some head teachers and governors in the city who did not recognise, for a variety of reasons, that they needed to join the collective ‘will’ to make improvements to their school.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members and Officers for their attendance at the meeting.

It was requested that the following would be included on the Committee’s work programme for 2019/20:

1. STEM;
2. The Plymouth Challenge Update – specifically regarding Leadership.

46. **OFSTED Inspection of Children, Young People and Families Service - to follow**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Neelam Bhardwaja (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) presented the OFSTED Inspection of Children, Young People and Families Service report.

Members were advised that the OFSTED Inspection report was published on 7 January 2019; the overall rating was judged as ‘requires improvement’ however of the 16 authorities assessed, only 2 were deemed to be good with the other 14 being judged as ‘requires improvement’.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) the quality of services to care leavers was something officers were currently working to improve; it was considered that the structure of the service did not lend to effective working therefore, after consulting staff, teams were more integrated;

- (b) a part of the OFSTED judgement related to the level of recording and evidencing and its significance; it was important that a child in care was able to see their life story however a succinct summary was considered more beneficial. Inspectors highlighted that social workers had referred to supervision meetings however supervision records did not clearly set out the direction or progression of the case of the child. Managers had been tasked with establishing if there were specific barriers preventing adequate recording of supervision and if training was required;
- (c) good housekeeping and recording was accepted as being an important factor of success as well as a safeguarding issue; it was considered that high workload had an impact upon the paperwork aspect and further work was required to be done to manage staff pressures and workloads;
- (d) all social workers had mobile technology however supervision recording was normally undertaken in an office setting.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Service Director for their attendance.

Members requested a further update on the OFSTED actions plans is provided to the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future.

47. **Together for Childhood Update - to follow**

The Chair advised Members that the Together for Childhood Update was added to the agenda as an information only item.

Members noted the update and agreed to keep Together for Childhood on the work programme for 2019/20.

48. **Work Programme**

Members agreed to include the following items to the work programme for 2019/20:

- Bullying and attendance – Select Review;
- Child exploitation update;
- STEM;
- The Plymouth Challenge Update – Leadership.

49. **Tracking Resolutions**

Members noted the tracking resolutions document.